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by Dodie Bellamy

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The Making of a Spiritual Movement

The Untold Story of Paul Twitchell and Eckankar

by David C. Lane

Email dlane@weber.ucsd.edu

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Due to Eckankar's repeated legal threats against David Lane, the bookcover with the famous **NO EK** symbol has been removed from this page. In its place there is a question mark which represents the questions that we would all like to ask this secretive organization.



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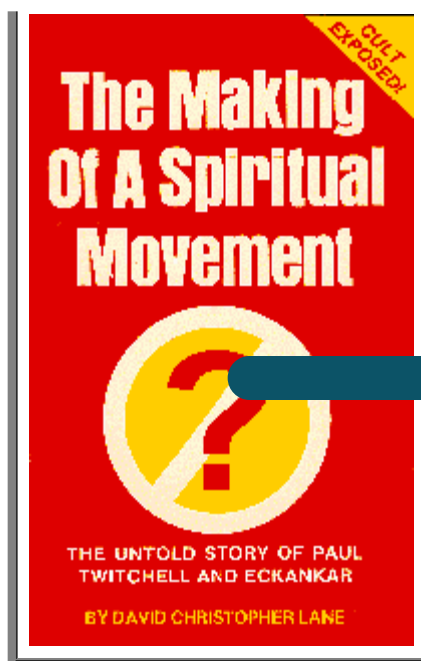
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Eckankar: A Former Member Revisits the Movement

by Dodie Bellamy
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Authors Note: The following is a cover story I wrote for the **San Diego Reader**, which was published June 22, 1995, under the title "Hi Fubbi, this is Gakko: Former Eckankar Member Revisits the Movement," a title I did not choose. This version is my original version before the **Reader** made several minor editorial changes. The *Reader* was quite supportive and allowed me free rein as far as style and content goes. Their main concern was that I make the article be about San Diego, a requirement that ended up being a lot of fun. I never would have written the extravagant sunset paragraph without it, for instance. In my article the sun literally rises and sets in San Diego. Focusing so much on place emphasized for me that this was a journey, both metaphorically and physically.

CULT-BUSTER DAVID LANE

"We use more discriminating intelligence when we buy a used car than when we buy a religion", says philosophy professor and cult-buster David Christopher Lane. "Buying a used car you at least look underneath the hood, hit the tires, maybe take it to a mechanic to check it out. But in buying a religion you're supposed to wear these narrow blinders, so that if anybody disagrees you can block it out. It's basically, check your brains at the door when you join a religion."

For the past twenty years, Lane's books and articles exposing the plagiarisms, lies, inconsistencies and scandals of a number of new religious movements have raised a fury among true believers. Members of various cults have made death threats, written him letters with skeletons on them, broken into his apartment, threatened lawsuits, and generally harassed him. Lane's no longer an easy man to find. He lives in the San Diego area, but the location is a closely guarded secret. He has no phone. *"I actually kept my phone for years explains Lane, until one night when you're asleep and you've got to get up at four in the morning and go to school, you get a phone call saying, "We're going to fucking kill you." You know what I mean? It gets tiresome."*

When I fly down from San Francisco in mid-December to interview Lane my interest goes beyond mere journalistic curiosity. For ten years I was a member of Eckankar, one of the groups Lane has written most extensively about. His critique was instrumental in my dropping out of Eckankar in the early '80s. This man literally changed my life. I anticipate our talk with a mixture of excitement and anxiety. Apparently Lane has equally conflicted feelings about me. Initially he refuses to come to the Hillcrest home where I'm staying, preferring to meet in a nearby restaurant. Since I don't want to play the awkward game of trying to figure out who one another are in public, I haggle. *"I'm worried about getting lost"* he says, exasperated. But it's just a few blocks off University. Finally, he agrees to come to the house, but I'm dubious as to whether he will really appear. With only a post office box and an answering service to connect me to him, Lane seems as slippery as Houdini. With the blink of an eye he could vanish from my life forever.

Lane does arrive, at one o'clock Thursday afternoon, on time to the minute. I open the door to a boyish thirty-eight-year-old with a full head of healthy brown hair. He's told me he surfs, and in his knee-length khaki shorts, plum-colored T-shirt and sandals, he looks like a surfer. His clothes seem to be tossed onto his rather stocky body. He extends his hand and smiles broadly. *"Hi, I'm Dave."* Sizing up his clean, homogenized att

a pool selling motivational tapes - how to lose weight, gain friends, make it rich in real estate with no money down.'

We spend roughly nine hours, spread over two days, hanging out together. Lane is a real charmer, and I am easily charmed, so we get along famously. Besides religion, our conversation ranges from Joan Crawford to *Pulp Fiction* to vegetarianism to his love of teaching to his family, Catholic school, surfing, surfing movies (Lane loves *Gidget*, hates *Big Wednesday*), and our first sexual experiences. His occurred in a tree house when he was fifteen. We joke about calling this article Out of the Tree House and into the Dog House.

Sitting at a table outside Monsoon at Village Hillcrest, surrounded by potted plants and curving walls of mango orange, gold, deep purple, and rusty red, Lane sips a Coke and tells me the history of his involvement with alternative religious movements. At seventeen Lane, who was raised Catholic in the San Fernando Valley, became interested in Radhasoami, a branch of **surat shabd yoga** founded in India in the nineteenth century. In 1978, after five years of study, he was initiated into Radhasoami in India by the late Maharaj Charan Singh.

In 1977, noting the similarities between Radhasoami and Eckankar, a religious movement founded in San Diego in 1965 by the late Paul Twitchell, Lane wrote a term paper comparing the two for an undergraduate religious studies class at California State University, Northridge. In the course of his research Lane discovered that Twitchell plagiarized whole chapters from Radhasoami texts, lied about biographical details, and commenced vast cover-ups concerning the true origin of Eckankar's doctrines.

Lane leans across the cafe table, excitedly tapping his straw. *"I found all this fun interesting stuff. I talked to Twitchell's first wife. Nobody knew he'd been married before. I was excited, twenty years old, in the moment of discovering something new. I had huge phone bills because I had called this professor or this person. So I sent my term paper to Eckankar, and then they turned around two months later and said they were going to sue me if I published it. So, I'm not scared of attorneys. My family is full of attorneys. Naturally the threat made me want to do more research. If they're going to sue you about a 120-page term paper when you're twenty years old, you know something's up."*

The following year he wrote a second paper, **The Making of a Spiritual Movement: The Untold Story of Paul Twitchell and Eckankar**. *"I was obsessed"*, Lane admits. *"I was on the Holy Grail of research."* Through a process that Lane himself does not completely understand, this manuscript was photocopied and circulated around the country. As the great Houdini wrote, *"The yellow thread of exposure seems to be inextricably woven into all fabrics whose strength is secrecy."* Houdini, like Lane, was a man whose obsessions drove him to expose religious frauds.

James Peebles, an Eckist and fellow classmate of Lane's also wrote a paper on Eckankar. The two students shared notes. *"Peebles,"* says Lane, *"got so disgruntled when he realized there was some kind of fraud being perpetuated in Eckankar, that he wrote Eckankar himself about these findings."* Peebles returned to his Baptist roots and sent his paper to Professor Ed Gruss of the Los Angeles Baptist College. Claiming to be a member of the **Spiritual Counterfeits Project**, an anti-cult group in Berkeley, an Eckankar representative asked Gruss for a copy of Peebles' report, which claimed that Eckankar was skirting tax laws and that the current Eck Master, Darwin Gross, had fathered an illegitimate child. Lane shrugs his shoulders, *"Whether it was right or wrong, who knows."* Eckankar then threatened Gruss with a two-and-a-half million dollar lawsuit for *publishing* Peebles' paper, for photocopying one copy of it.

In the meantime, Lane graduated from Northridge, visited India, and enrolled at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, where in 1979 he met Brian Walsh. *"He wanted to make my research more available. So he puts up a thousand bucks and out comes this funky xeroxed self-published book with a weird cover"*. Within three weeks of its publication, **The Making of a Spiritual Movement** sold out. Around the same time, the Spiritual Counterfeits Project published their own journal, **Eckankar, a Hard Look at a New Religion**, based largely on Lane's manuscript, which they distributed to nearly every Eck center in the world. Disillusioned Eckists left the movement in droves.

Eckankar set up a meeting with Lane at their international headquarters in Menlo Park. "Were you nervous?" I ask. "No, I was excited that somebody would pay attention to my research." Lane exclaims. "I think they expected somebody who was more academic-looking. This was '79, fifteen years ago. I looked like a little kid. I'm a surfer, so I had this surfer hair and a turtleneck. They were dressed up in suits. They had this little tape recorder, and I was impressed - I thought it was very professional. And they looked at me like, 'What's this geek doing?' We sat down and they were really uptight because they knew the impact of my research. So, I said, 'You guys can get out of this simply: just explain that Twitchell plagiarized. And just explain that Twitchell covered up his life.' The upshot of it was, they didn't do anything."

Lane tried in vain to place his controversial book with a major publisher. "I got a number of bites, but they got worried because Eckankar's so happy to sue people." In 1983 Lane and Brian Walsh issued a glossier version of **The Making of a Spiritual Movement** through their own Del Mar Press. Eckankar threatened a lawsuit for the inappropriate use of their trademark symbol on the book's cover. Due to the popularity of the Ghostbusters logo, Lane and Walsh had put a no smoking sign over Eckankar's logo, which is EK formed into a circle. Del Mar Press agreed to change the cover on future editions. *The Making of a Spiritual Movement*, which is not advertised or available in bookstores, has sold over 10,000 copies.

Finally, 1992, Garland, a publisher of hardback reference books, accepted Lane's manuscript for their library series. Eckankar got wind of an early advertisement for the book before it came out and "legally harassed" Garland for several months. Even though the book was already typeset, Garland decided to withdraw it. Lane's green eyes turn serious.

"Be very careful with Eckankar. When they find out you're talking to me, I guarantee that their lawyers will write the **Reader**. I'm sure of it." He taps his finger on the table. "Actually, *Eckankar* is the one who has kept me going because they keep threatening me every time I try to come out with something. They sent letters about me claiming I was the negative force, that I was predicted from the beginning of mankind."

In Twitchell's book **The Far Country**, alone, Lane found over 400 plagiarized paragraphs. "The more research you do the more you realize that Twitchell was an incredible plagiarizer." He smiles to himself as if he were having a beatific vision of Paul Twitchell hunched over some Radhasoami text, scribbling away. "In order to find out the full extent of Twitchell's plagiarism, you'd have to go through all the books that he read in his lifetime. I don't mean just an idea or a thought, I'm talking about the reproduction of grammatical mistakes, semicolon misuse. I'm talking about the very form of that truth being copied. Not the truth itself. I don't know what that is."

So who was this mysterious Paul Twitchell? Twitchell claimed to have been born on a boat on the Mississippi, a few minutes after a great earthquake shook the mid-South and formed a lake in its wake. Twitchell told his second wife Gail that he was born in the early twenties, but in one of his books he places the date of his birth as, fantastically, in the early nineteenth century. Lane's research indicates, however, that Twitchell was born between 1908 and 1912, on dry land in Paducah, Kentucky.

During the 30s and 40's Twitchell was a prolific writer. He's listed in Ripley's *Believe it or Not*s having sold an article every day. *The Courier-Journal Magazine*, to which he was a regular contributor, reported that he sold 1,800 stories and articles in three years.

In 1942, after a stint in the Navy, Twitchell moved to New York, where he continued his journalism career, attended many churches, and read extensively on spiritual subjects. A job as a correspondent for *Our Navy* took him to Washington, D. C. in 1945. There he and his first wife, Camille, joined the Self-Revelation Church of Absolute Monism, a system of yoga founded by **Swami Premananda**. In 1950, the Twitchells moved to the church compounds, but five years later Twitchell was asked to leave the Church for "personal misconduct". That same year he and his wife separated. Their divorce was finalized in 1960.

After leaving the Self-Revelation Church, Twitchell dove in the Radhasoami movement. **Radhasoami** is a yogic teaching which, according to Lane, "is designed to enable the soul or consciousness to ascend

beyond the physical body to higher spiritual regions by means of an internal sound or life current." Central to the teachings of Radhasoami, continues Lane, "is the necessity of a living human master competent in initiating disciples into the practice and technique of listening to the inner sound, contemplating the inner light, and leaving the human body at will."

The Indian guru, **Kirpal Singh**, figures prominently in Twitchell's early writing. Eight years later he broke with Kirpal Singh and thereafter denied any involvement with him. In the late fifties Twitchell also became a staff member of L. Ron Hubbard's **Church of Scientology**, another association that would later be denied.

Twitchell married his second wife, Gail Atkinson, in San Francisco in 1964. Shortly afterwards, a 500-year-old Tibetan monk, Rebazar Tarzs, appeared to Twitchell and instructed him to move to San Diego. Twitchell was living in Point Loma in 1965 when he started teaching workshops and selling booklets on how to leave your body. On October 22, Twitchell claimed to receive 'The Rod of Power' from Rebazar Tarzs, becoming the 971st Living Eck Master.

Eckankar, the Ancient Science of Soul Travel was officially founded. "For a year and a half or two years", says Lane, "it was a shoestring operation. He was advertising in **Fate** magazine, **Orion** magazine, **Cosmic Star**". In one article Lane shows me, Twitchell is reported to have piercing blue eyes, to sleep only four hours a night, to read 5,000 words a minute, to eat little, and to have 'the ability to be in all places at the same time'. Eckankar took off like wildfire, growing from three students to thousands in less than three years. Today it is perhaps the most successful religious movement to come out of the '60s, claiming a worldwide membership in the tens of thousands.

The teachings of Eckankar are presented to the public through books, free brochures, advertised meetings and lectures, and, of course, word of mouth. According to one brochure, which invites me to "experience the miracle of spiritual growth" and to "climb the stairway to spiritual freedom", Eckankar membership is renewable on a yearly basis. Members receive a monthly discourse, which they have the option of studying alone or in classes. The suggested annual membership donation for individuals is \$120, a bargain in the miracles and freedom market. A representative at the Eckankar international office assured me that no one is turned away for lack of funds.

Eckankar, which is now called the *Religion of Light and Sound*, teaches that each individual is Soul inhabiting a human body. Soul, being a spark of God, is on a journey to find its way home to God, or the Sugmad. Eckankar is the most direct path to becoming a "co-worker with the Sugmad". Initiations link Soul to the Eck (holy spirit), which can be seen as light and heard as sound. Followers of Eckankar believe that beyond the physical world there are many other realms existing at higher vibratory rates. Through daily spiritual exercises one can shift one's awareness from the physical world and soul travel to these higher planes. In order to burn off all their karma in this lifetime and to be released from the cycle of death and reincarnation, Eckists practice detachment from the vagaries of life. This is not seen as coldness or indifference, but as a precursor to unconditional love.

The Living Eck Master acts as the organizational head and as a guide to the aspirant's spiritual journey. The inner form of the Living Eck Master, known as the **Mahanta**, works with students in the "dreamstate" and during their spiritual exercises. The Living Eck Master descends from an unbroken line of Vairagi Masters. Any of these 900+ masters may appear to spiritual seekers on the inner planes - or in the physical world, often in disguise. The beggar you meet on the street may really be an Eck Master.

At one Eckankar seminar in Florida, a panhandler was stationed outside the hotel where the seminar was held. Eckists left and right were smiling at the guy, stopping for long chats, and tossing money into his cup. The perplexed beggar was in hog heaven. And who knows? He may have been Rebazar Tarzs.

In writing the above paragraph I consulted Eckankar materials, but I didn't need to. After giving lectures and teaching Eckankar classes for ten years, I already knew it all. As I sit at my computer, I play Billie Holiday's *Lady in Satin*. In Eckankar there is a technique called the Golden-tongued Wisdom, in which you find spiritual guidance through an overheard conversation, a voice on the radio, or the lyrics of a popular song. A line will leap out and inspire you. "I'm a fool to want you", quivers Billie through my stereo speakers.

Was I a fool to want Eckankar? I don't think so. In the early seventies when I joined Eckankar I was dysfunctionally shy, a borderline agoraphobic, afraid to talk to salesladies in department stores. Besides my straight A's, I had nothing to give me a sense of self worth. In Eckankar, since everyone is Soul, everyone is worthy. As Eckankar filled my life, I felt like I was entering Shangri-La: a new glistening world of love, of possibility opened before me. I gave up drugs, and my grades went down.

While a few people I met were off the wall, Eckists in general make wonderful friends, kind, caring, non-judgmental. Operating, as I do now, in a professional arts world where people want a resumé before deciding whether or not to talk to you, I miss the support of the Eckankar community. And the sex -- though Eckankar in no way encourages sexual contact among its members -- with that degree of trust and the sense of two souls meeting, the sex was great. I was twenty-one. My only regrets were that I sold all my rock albums to pay for my membership.

Lane's research on Eckankar is meticulously documented. **The Making of a Spiritual Movement** is, in fact, so well documented that at times it reads like a 200-page footnote. It lacks the wit, passion, and narrative drive of his other books, *Exposing Cults* and *The Radhasoami Tradition*. In *The Making of a Spiritual Movement*, like his counterpart Houdini, Lane seems shackled. Two figures emerge from the stilted style of *The Making of a Spiritual Movement*: the protean Paul Twitchell and his young, vivacious wife, Gail, who, after Twitchell's death, married his successor, Darwin Gross, in a Dynasty-like power play that troubled and thrilled the faithful. Lane attributes the initial success of Eckankar to Gail's organizational abilities.

He takes a sip of his Coke and explains, "She's very clean and clear about her business acumen. Everybody I've ever talked to who knows Gail says she's a very sharp person. And Twitchell was also very sharp, but maybe not sharp business-wise. He never had much money. Combine these two forces, the creativity of Paul Twitchell with the organizational skills of Gail..." Lane opens his hands in a gesture indicating anything could happen. "I don't think Twitchell imagined that Eckankar would blossom the way it did. It went through the roof a lot quicker than he expected. It's the reason, I believe, that he plagiarized so blatantly".

"Because he had to get a lot done?"

"You got it. The way to get more income is to have new material. Imagine it - you've got a lot of new clientele out there ready to buy your stuff. To come up with original material takes time, and time is money. Dr. Bluth, Twitchell's personal doctor and vice president of Eckankar at the time, has confirmed that he gave Twitchell books from the Radhasoami library. So, Twitchell starts to plagiarize extensively from these books in order to get new material to get new money."

"More and more money comes in. His earlier writings didn't really talk about Rebazar Tarzs. The 500-year-old bearded Tibetan monk, Rebazar Tarzs, wears a maroon robe, carries in his powerful right hand a huge walking staff, and speaks with a musical voice. He's a character who has seized the imaginations of Eckists as completely as Ahab or Falstaff has seized ours. Instead, Twitchell wrote about Kirpal Singh and Swami Premananda. Now what do you do when your group is charging money and does not follow any of the restrictions of this Indian group it evolved out of, one whose teachings are free? So I came upon this idea called genealogical dissociation. Simply put, Twitchell cut his connection with Radhasoami for good marketing reasons. He had to make it seem like it's his own creation, because if he linked the two he'd lose his potential clientele."

It was in order to hide these past connections, Lane believes, that Twitchell created the unbroken line of **Vairagi Eck Masters**, dating back some six million years to Gakko, who emigrated from the planet Venus.

"Understandably he changed the names of his sources, because he didn't want people to know about his past. Remember, he'd been kicked out of Swami Premananda's church in 1955. His previous associations were tainted. He accelerated his cover up to the point that it became a mythology in which Twitchell couldn't remember all the names. On tape Twitchell is asked about Rebazar Tarzs. In what century was he

born? He totally doesn't know, he doesn't know what the guy's talking about. 'Oh, oh! Rebazar Tarzs, yeah, *that* Rebazar Tarzs.' "Understand, he's got names coming out of the woodwork."

"So who do you think Rebazar Tarzs really is?"

"Probably a composite cover name for three people: Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, which was started 500 years ago; Sawan Singh, who was Kirpal Singh's guru; and Swami Premananda. Whereas **Sudar Singh** [another memorable character in Twitchell's cosmology] is a straight cover for Kirpal Singh."

In *The Making of Spiritual Movement*, Lane quotes numerous passages from Twitchell's magazine articles written in the sixties, in which Twitchell cites Swami Premananda, Kirpal Singh, Meher Baba, Guru Nanak, Kabir, and even Jesus. Lane then quotes these same passages as they were later reproduced, usually word for word, in Eckankar books, with the names changed to the Eck Masters Sudar Singh, Fubbi Quantz, Rebazar Tarzs, Lai Tsi, and Gopal Das.

Lane and his friends playfully call one another by the names of Eck Masters. Lane places his hand to his face like a phone receiver, "Hi Fubbi, this is Gakko." I choke down the last gulp of my Green Garden vegetable cocktail and ask, "Where do you think Twitchell got these names?"

"He got them from his Indian books on Radhasoami, or Julian Johnson's **The Path of the Masters**, or from **With a Great Master in India**. He came up with the name Sudar Singh from the name Sudarshan Singh - he just cut off the 'shan' part of it and put 'Sudar.' Usually he mixes Indian names with Chinese names that he read about in some popular Tibetan or Taoist book, and he'll conflate the two. An example is Jagat Ho. Now, 'Jagat' is actually the first name of a Radhasoami guru named Jagat Singh. Then he took the 'Ho', and he put the two words together. He does that all the time."

"So who is Jagat Ho?"

"He's one of the 970 Eck Masters who runs one of the Golden Temples near El Cajon." Lane laughs heartily at his joke. "Once when I was driving down to Baja on one of my frequent surf trips", he continues, "I noticed to my amazement a highway sign that said, Rebasar. I don't know exactly what it means - no passing - or something like that. I said to myself, I bet this is where Twitchell got the name Rebazar Tarzs! Remember, when Twitchell founded Eckankar in 1965 he was living in San Diego at Point Loma. I would not put it past Twitchell to have simply coined the name from one of his trips to Baja."

For tax purposes Twitchell moved Eckankar to Las Vegas, but he maintained residence in San Diego for the rest of his life. When he died in 1971 he was living in Del Mar. Lane asks me if I want to see Twitchell's Del Mar home.

"Sure!"

But when we go to the Hillcrest Village parking garage to retrieve Lane's car he can't find it. As we aimlessly wander back and forth between the second and third levels of the garage, I smile at my surfer companion's inability to negotiate this concrete urban maze. Clearly he is more comfortable with the fluid topography of waves, of meditation, of philosophical inquiry. Finally, as a last resort, Lane suggests we exit the parking garage and then walk down the ramp where we drove in. Lane imagines himself driving, "Let me see ... I turned left here, now right, then I drove straight for a bit." Using this gyroscopic homing pigeon technique, he leads me straight to his little white Nissan.

Once we get to Del Mar, Lane pulls to the side of the road and examines a copy of Twitchell's death certificate to get the exact address. "Here it is, Pine Avenue, right next to where I was living when I doing my books in the '80s. If I had a really good arm I could have thrown a baseball up the hill, without gravity, and maybe hit his house."

"Did you know this before you moved there?"

"No, I had no idea."

How Oedipal! We drive over and park a few blocks from the beach in front of a posh two-story wooden house with a cobblestone drive, surrounded by Torrey pines. Lane leans down to better peer through his window.

"I don't remember it looking this way", he says pensively. "I don't remember it being this nice. I don't remember that second story. It's a bitchin' house."

Since we can't think of anything else to say about the house, I ask Lane to tell me about Twitchell's mysterious death. Many Eckists regard this death with the same mixture of awe and curiosity with which we regard the death of JFK. I figure Lane knows plenty about this. But Lane refuses to reveal details, and for this article will only repeat the facts as listed on the death certificate: Twitchell died of a heart attack around one o'clock in the morning on September 17, 1971, in Cincinnati, Ohio. The story he tells me off the record, however, is filled with enough ardor and drama to qualify as an alternate ending to *Citizen Kane*.

"But, Dave," I whine, "why won't you talk about it on tape?"

"Because I have a certain kind of respect for him, a kind of sweet affection. There's certain things I left out of the book, and one of them is the night Twitchell died. There's lots of stuff I know about Eckankar, lots of stuff that is real juicy and real scandalous, but I wanted to limit my book to some major salient features about plagiarism and cover-up. What I found was so obvious that anybody could have discovered it. It wasn't just David Lane's personal opinion. I have nice feelings towards Eckankar. I don't have a real axe to grind except for being hassled legally for the last decade."

JOHN-ROGER HINKINS

At Hillcrest's Espresso Roma Cafe, Lane confides, "The people who scare me are John-Roger's people, not Eckankar's."

John-Roger Hinkins, founder of the Church of the Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness (M.S.I.A., pronounced "Messiah") has gotten a lot of bad press lately. Last year former cult member Peter McWilliams published a scathing tell-all, *Life 102: What to Do When Your Guru Sues You*, November's *Vanity Fair* linked Arianna Huffington's allegiance to M.S.I.A. to her husband's unsuccessful Senate campaign, and the March issue of *Playboy* ran a detailed exposé. But Lane had the jump on all of them when back in 1984 he wrote, **The J.R. Controversy: A Critical Analysis of John-Roger Hinkins and M.S.I.A.**

Lane pays for my coffee and his Coke, and we sit down at a small dark table. The walls are covered with Andrea Zuill's dramatically lit oil paintings of monstrous chalky-fleshed zombies. I imagine them as the tormented souls of all the cultists who have lost their faith because of Lane. "John-Roger was a follower of Eckankar," begins Lane.

"In '68 he was a 'convener,' which means he held ECK satsangs [classes] in his home in Rosemead, California. After a year or so, he branched off and started his own group, M.S.I.A., claiming that in 1963 he had a kidney stone operation and that after nine days of being in a coma he had been commissioned to be the Mystical Traveler Consciousness."

At first Hinkins thought it was the legendary Rebazar Tarzs who came to him on the inner planes and passed on the "keys" to the Kingdom, but, later, after seeing a photo of Radhasoami guru Sawan Singh, Hinkins decided that it was really Sawan Singh who had given him the mantleship.

Browsing in a bookstore, Lane stumbled upon one of John-Roger's books and noticed it was a "rip-off" of Eckankar. "You can imagine how I felt," exclaims Lane. "This was in '76 or '77, and I was twenty years old, so it's like *All the President's Men*. I wrote to him, and he wrote a real nice letter back, saying that we should get together and talk. This guy's pretty smart, because he knows that if he pays attention to me, that's a good way of buying me off, so he can spin-doctor my research. He invited me to his house in Mandeville Canyon, a beautiful house, a mansion. I should have been suspicious because there were really

good looking guys all over the compound, washing his car in short-shorts. I was very naive. The minute he saw me he canceled all of his appointments and spent six hours with me." Lane leans across the table towards me and grins.

"I never thought he was gay until everybody said, 'Hello-o, looks like he likes you a little too much, Dave.' One of his major disciples, Victor Toso, later revealed that he had kind of a quasi-crush on me."

I nudge, "Can't you tell when somebody's got a crush on you?" Lane looks away shyly. "Did John-Roger ever make any moves on you?"

"No, no, no, no."

"Okay, Dave."

"He's really into setting it up so that I would get to the place where I would want it. That's his mentality. I was flattered that here was a spiritual master who was spending hours with me instead of dissing me or suing me. He wanted to know every dirty piece of laundry on Twitchell and Eckankar. He was obsessed. He used to send me Christmas cards, he gave me his personal phone number, and he offered me \$5,000 to help with my research on Eckankar."

"Did you take any money?"

Lane shakes his head. "No. I kind of knew he was a fraud, but at the time he was being nice to me so I wasn't in the mood to expose him. Well, the upshot of it is, we were friendly for five years, and then in 1983 four of his closest disciples defected. They knew what I had done with Eckankar, and they thought, 'Well he can do this with J.R.' So there was a secret meeting in a Santa Monica condominium with these defectors. Very top secret, for they were really scared of upsetting John-Roger. I taped them for five hours." The accusations leveled against Hinkins included embezzling money, plagiarizing from the teachings of Paul Twitchell and others, skirting zoning laws, illegally obtaining airfare discounts, setting up tape recorders throughout his house to obtain information that he would later use to appear psychic, and sexual misconduct.

Lane pauses and thinks for a bit. He's concerned about sounding homophobic, particularly since he knows I'm staying with two gay men.

"This is where I've got to be careful. Everybody's sexuality is different than everybody else's. I imagine we have a wide spectrum. The problem is that John-Roger claims to be celibate. His disciples told me he would pick a guy every night out of the staff and claim that they needed to have sex with him in order to increase their aura - or they needed, pardon my language, a 'rectal innerphase' in order to burn off karma."

"Innerphase?"

"He has this thing called aura innerphasing, where you do aura balancing, soul balancing, etheric balancing. He usually likes heterosexual disciples, that is people that are not overtly gay, to have sex with. The disciples felt used and manipulated for spiritual reasons. It's not as if J.R. said, 'Look, I find you attractive. Let's go to bed.' That's one clear way of doing it-instead of saying, 'I'm God and God says that in order for you to get to the higher astral planes you need to get on all fours or whatever.' A friend of mine calls him the Divine Rump Ranger."

After the secret meeting, Lane phoned Hinkins to ask him about these charges. "He went nuts. The courtship was over. Man, it was a nasty conversation. I told him I didn't plan to write about him, but he started to send out smear letters around the country, saying that I was a gay FBI agent in San Diego, that I had researchers working for me that I wasn't paying. Some letters contained death threats against me and my informants. In one he refers to me as 'Lane the widower'."

"So then I wrote **The J.R. Controversy** for a new journal called *Understanding Cults*. When it came out I got a twenty-five page letter from a group in Wilshire called the Coalition for Civil and Spiritual

Freedom. It never existed. It was a P.O. Box with John-Roger's own name signed to it."

Four or five months later, on October 5, 1984, Lane's apartment in Del Mar was broken into. "John-Roger personally came and robbed my house. I was teaching at UC San Diego at the time. I came home around 12:30 in the afternoon and the place was ransacked, I mean I couldn't get in the door. So I had to climb through the bedroom window. The bed was overturned, drawers were everywhere. The phone wire had been disconnected. And there was a big note on a box that said, **NO MORE**. No jewelry was gone - he took only research stuff, including materials for my doctoral dissertation."

"He took nothing else?"

"He took my wife's personal diaries, a camera which he must have thought had film in it, video tapes, an address book, and my recipe file containing my favorite recipe for Del Mar Lentil Loaf. He probably thought my recipe file was written in code, had secret information, or something like that. Gumby and Pokey were laid out on the bed, like they'd been thrown. I said, 'I know it's John-Roger-look at Gumby and Pokey!'"

"I called John-Roger immediately. I got one of his disciples. I said, 'Where was John-Roger yesterday?' The guy turned totally paranoid. His voice changed, 'Well, we can't reveal that information.' - 'Was he in San Diego?' No reply. The next day Channel 8 News came out and did as their lead story 'Cult Researcher Robbed.' They took a picture of Gumby and Pokey lying on the bed, and of a copy of my article, 'The J.R. Controversy.' But they didn't name John-Roger."

About four weeks later Lane's guru in India, Charan Singh, received a letter, supposedly from another follower in San Diego, criticizing Lane and quoting from his wife's stolen diaries. Charan Singh realized the letter was a fraud and forwarded it to Lane. That same week Hinkins wrote to Lane assuring him that he wanted to be friends again and that he had nothing to do with the robbery. Hinkins also wrote to Charan Singh asking him to use his influence to get Lane to stop doing research on him. All three letters are printed in the same typeface with the same malfunctioning capital A.

"Then," Lane says excitedly, "John-Roger committed the biggest mistake he's ever made. He took my wife's diaries and made hand-written notes in the margins. 'Should I send this to the IRS?' 'Should I send this to Eckankar?' Little notes he was making to himself. Then he mailed some of the stolen documents anonymously to Eckankar, under the assumption that they would use it against me, and I would think Eckankar robbed my house. But Eckankar's attorneys mailed the package back to me. It came from a P.O. box that John-Roger had personally paid for. The guy's like an idiot, right? And so I had handwriting analysis done on the writing on the diaries and on that NO MORE sign. Two different analysts verified they were all written by John-Roger Hinkins. Moreover, people within John-Roger's group have confirmed that on the day of the robbery he was in San Diego, and he came home that night, hot, sweaty, like he'd done something really bad, dude. Another person in John-Roger's group, who has to remain anonymous because he's right next to him, admitted to me that he was with John-Roger the day of the robbery, and that John-Roger personally entered into it."

Lane decided against pursuing a lawsuit against Hinkins, but he did go public with his story. In *Understanding Cults* Lane published **The Criminal Activities of John-Roger Hinkins**, a laborious account of Hinkins' alleged break-in and smear campaign. He also gave full accounts to the San Diego Sheriff's Department and to numerous news agencies.

"On the *Marie Vega Show* in Los Angeles, I said, 'John-Roger Hinkins robbed my house. He threatened to sue the TV station for a million dollars if they ever ran the program again. But they kept running it, and he never sued them.'" In August 1988, *The Los Angeles Times* published an extensive two-part critique of John-Roger's activities, based on Lane's research. Lane also appeared on Geraldo Rivera's **Now It Can Be Told**. "Geraldo was in New York and I was on satellite hook-up at Universal Studios in San Fernando Valley. 'The Cadillac of Cults. Are your tax dollars being spent by this group?' So they interviewed me, and I had this rainbow tie on, and Geraldo and I were going at each other. I said, 'Yeah, Geraldo, this guy robbed my house, he did this he did this he did that' - all on national TV. I just went off on him. At this

stage Peter McWilliams, the guy who later wrote *Life 102*, was still pro-John-Roger, so he was putting his hands on the camera, that kind of scene, when they tried to interview John-Roger. So you get this juxtaposition, Lane really going off on John-Roger and McWilliams trying to protect J.R.'s reputation."

After such an exhausting chronicle, I feebly inquire, "Are you still doing research on John-Roger?"

Lane takes a deep breath. "No."

ECKISTS

Several hundred members of Eckankar live in the San Diego area, but not all of them partake in local events. Although no meetings are required, the local Eckankar newsletter lists a variety of classes, book discussions, "Hu chants," and lectures. Many events are open to the public, including the Sunday worship services, which tackle spiritual topics of broad interest. Last April the current Living Eck Master, Harold Klemp, spoke at a three-day "major seminar" at the San Diego Marriott Hotel & Marina. Each year Eckankar holds three of these major U.S. seminars, which can draw 6,000+ people.

Three local Eckists agreed to speak with me. Late Wednesday afternoon I visit transpersonal psychologist Charles Richards at his office on Camino del Mar. I'm greeted by a tall handsome black man with short cropped hair graying slightly at the temples. He looks professional but not stuffy in his moustache, blue suit jacket, gray shirt, and black boots. As we shake hands I notice he's wearing a gold ring with an embossed EK logo. Around his neck hangs a similar pendant. When I sit down on the cream-colored day bed, he suggests I might be more comfortable in the armchair facing him. On the wall to my right is a framed print of the yin yang symbol, with a feather fixed to it.

In 1978 Richards moved from North Carolina to San Diego to pursue his graduate training in psychology. Besides working as a therapist, Richards has taught at the University of Humanistic Studies and is an adjunct staff member of the Center for Creative Leadership in La Jolla, an organization that specializes in executive management leadership training. He also does private executive coaching. He is a reserved man whose dimpled smile betrays a sense of humor. On the desk behind him sits a Teddy bear.

When I ask him what Eckankar's position is on Lane's research, Richards, who's been in Eckankar for twenty years, says he doesn't know. "Basically I feel that David Lane is making a name for himself by being an antagonist to Eckankar. Everybody has a right to pursue whatever interest they have. He focuses a lot on past things, Paul Twitchell and how much his writings look like the writings of a teaching Lane happens to be in. That's his axe to grind with Eckankar. You can get in a debate over whether one paragraph in one of Paul Twitchell's writings looks like a paragraph in somebody else's writings, but that has nothing to do with your spiritual experiences and the confirmation you get personally through the teachings and your work with the inner master. To me if people want to get into those kind of discussions, fine, and I'll kick it around with them for a while too if they want to talk on that level, but the stuff that Lane goes after has nothing to do for me with the validity of the teachings."

"When I was in Eckankar, one of the things that I really liked about it was its respect for other faiths, and that there was no pressure to get anybody to join."

"Sri Harold Klemp has taken a special effort to make it clear that we accept the value and the need for all different paths and religions because people operate at different states of consciousness. Eckankar is not for everybody. The Temple of Eck in Chanhassen [Minnesota] is open to people of all faiths to come, to attend the worship services, maybe just to enhance their own beliefs. It's even available for community events. Eckankar is still very much open to and supportive of whatever religion a person belongs to. In fact, we find more in common with people of other religious or spiritual beliefs that we have with people who don't have any religious or spiritual beliefs, simply because they have a commitment to spirit on some level."

I'm curious about how Eckankar had changed since I left it in the early '80s. "Well," Richards says slowly and thoughtfully in a charming Southern accent, "I think the present Living Eck Master has not changed the essence of the teachings, which is basically about self-realization and god-realization in the most direct way that the individual can achieve that. Rather, he's tried to make the teachings more accessible to the average person who's interested in religion or spirituality but may not be familiar with a lot of the terms that we've used in the past."

"What alternative terms have been developed?"

"Instead of talking about contemplations or the nurat or the surat technique for the light and sound, we just say we do spiritual exercises. They're very much like physical exercises, but they're for soul, to strengthen soul's connection with spirit. The spiritual exercises are a form of prayer. We have a different focus and intent, that's all. We talk about the Hu as a prayer song, or a love song to God, instead of saying it's a chant or mantra. In the past we thought that this was our little private esoteric religion. So Harold said, 'Hey, why should we make this difficult for people? Let's try to make it easy for them to at least understand what we're doing, what we're about, and what the potential of the teaching is.'"

"A lot of people who read the *Reader* would see Eckankar as a cult. How would you address that issue?"

Richards takes a long, reticent pause before he answers. "People typically define cults, first of all, as based around worshipping a personality. We don't do that in Eckankar. Secondly, we don't have any kind of communal living. Eckists are all over the world, and in different walks of life, and from different political orientations, different socio-economic levels. There's always been a complete reliance on the individual's own inner guides and not some pre-established protocol that everybody has to operate under. Since its early days Eckankar has always really been a religion. It's had to be recognized as such in this country to operate as a non-profit organization. When you look what we do relative to other religions it basically is no different, we just have a different doctrine and somewhat different beliefs." Richards flashes me his dimples. "We figure, if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, we might as well call it a duck."

When I leave Richards' office it's dusk. As I stroll toward the ocean through a lush, affluent neighborhood, disappointment creeps over me like the tide. I was never able to penetrate Richards' reassuring politeness until I turned the conversation from Eckankar to Freud, Adler and Jung. Then his whole manner changed - he leaned forward in his chair, his voice emphatically rose and fell. But even in his formality I instinctively trusted him.

Del Mar's beach is amazingly clean. People are sitting on park benches, pushing baby carriages along paths, jogging beside the water. The air is cool as I listen to the soft lapping of waves. The vivid orange-pink horizon stretches on endlessly beneath a nearly full moon. I feel like I've stumbled into a New Age greeting card or a novel by Iris Murdoch, try to imagine experiencing this extravagance on a regular basis. Murdoch's obsession with water suddenly makes sense. In *The Sea, the Seas* she writes, "Far away in that ocean of gold, stars were silently shooting and falling and finding their fates, among those billions and billions of merging golden lights. And curtain after curtain of gauze was quietly removed, and I saw stars behind stars behind stars, as in the magical Odeons of my youth. And I saw into the vast soft interior of the universe which was slowly and gently turning itself inside out. I went to sleep, and in my sleep I seemed to hear a sound of singing." If I lived in Del Mar it would be so easy to believe in magic. I want to linger and linger, but as the horizon shrinks to a thin orange line, my urban fears overcome the mystical moment.

On Camino del Mar I stop in front of a shop window filling with whirling white bits. They're styrofoam packing blown by a fan. It's the week before Christmas, but I never expected to find snow flurries in Southern California. The magic just keeps on coming. In another window a foot tall slab of amethyst had been turned into a fountain. On top of the rushing water twirls a dazzling crystal ball.

Friday afternoon I visit twenty-two year veteran of Eckankar, Kevin McMahon, in his two-story Cardiff home. I'm surprised to meet a casually dressed middle-aged man with graying hair, who seemed

much younger on the phone. McMahon looks as Irish as his name, with a large soft face and a sad mouth that bends pleasantly when he smiles. As he fetches me a glass of juice I sit in his cozy living room, which is decorated with family photos, relics from Thailand, and McMahon's own paintings, imaginary landscapes with lots of vivid blue. McMahon, who was raised Catholic in New York City and on Long Island, has always been interested in spirituality. In the Army he traveled to Thailand, where he met his wife. "She was a Buddhist, and I became interested in Buddhism. You know, just a natural progression. When I came back to the States I read a book by Paul Twitchell called *The Tiger's Fang*. I had heard about this ability to get out of the body where one can have an internal spiritual experience. The experiential aspect to Eckankar really interested me, and that's how it started."

McMahon seems suspicious of me, so I tell him that my current husband is an Irish Catholic from Long Island, and that I'm still very much in contact with my former husband, who's a higher initiate of Eckankar like himself. He's unimpressed on both counts.

Cautiously I bring up David Lane. "He has a personal thing against Eckankar," he briskly replies. "I can't understand why he would be doing this because the Eckists have never gone out of their way to hurt him, but he claims that they did, I think, in one regard. I know that here in San Diego when we had our Eck center, elderly members of Eckankar who were sitting at the center got threatening telephone calls from Christian organizations."

"Do you think this was because of Lane?"

"No, it had nothing to do with him. I'm just saying that if he had a personal problem with some Eckists, this is not an indictment against Eckankar, this is an indictment against the individuals he's had contact with. I met David Lane in San Diego. He was giving a talk at UCSD, trying to sell his book, preaching against Eckankar and a whole bunch of other religions. I stood up and said, 'You know, I'm a member of the community, I'm a coach in the Little League, I'm involved with the schools.' I gave a list of my involvements with the community, and then I said, 'I'm an Eckist and I believe in God. Why is one faith trying to knock somebody traveling the same path to God? It doesn't make sense.'"

And all the people kind of looked at me as if to say, 'Well, jeez, he doesn't look evil.' Lane came up and he talked to me and thanked me for coming. David Lane has his own personal agenda. We see that all the time." Though McMahon is obviously angry about Lane, he maintains a kind, gentle manner. I get the sense his gentleness does not come naturally, that it has been worked at, with great success.

"What about Lane's plagiarism charges?" I ask. "What I find interesting is that his material doesn't shake the belief of most Eckists."

"This is why," he responds immediately. "We don't rely on the written word. I had out of the body experiences, I had contact with spirit, I saw the blue light, saw all the things they talk about in the books - prior to coming to Eckankar. A lot of people have. I met a guy from Vietnam whose whole family traveled here to San Diego by boat, guided by Rebazar Tarzs, who's one of the Eck Masters that's written about in the books. And he didn't know anything about Eckankar."

"How did he know it was Rebazar Tarzs?"

"The guide was a bearded man in this maroon robe. When the Vietnamese fellow was in San Diego he saw a poster for an Eckankar event that had a picture of Rebazar Tarzs on it, and he recognized him. We've had people who have recognized Harold Klemp prior to his becoming the Living Eck Master; he kept coming to them into their dreams. Plagiarism charges fall on deaf ears with Eckists because we've had experiences outside of book learning. If we were to rely on books as the source of our knowledge and our truth, we'd be really hurting because we'd be all going in different directions. There'd be nothing to believe. I'm not interested in all this other dialogue that David Lane is so focused on. People's experiences don't matter to David Lane. If that's his focus in life then he has a very limited view of life."

McMahon explains that plagiarism isn't always what it seems. "Understand that if you read the sacred works of all the religions, such as the Bhagavat Gita, the Bible, or the Koran, you're going to see

references almost exactly alike." He tells me a "phenomenal" story about an American writer and a European writer who, unbeknownst to one another, wrote identical books and sent them to the same publisher. "You can explain it in a lot of different ways. Paul was an avid reader. He read thousands and thousands of books, and he was a spiritually hungry man. His quest for knowledge and experience of God is without question. This is not the type of individual who was looking for riches - he didn't dress well, he didn't have a lot of possessions or anything. His only interest was getting the message out about the light and sound of God."

McMahon doesn't blame anyone for being skeptical. "I think that in Eckankar skepticism is healthy," he continues. "One of the disciplines that we employ is the law of discrimination. We actually challenge our inner experiences in the name of God, to make sure that they're not phony, not of the negative world of Kal. We have to make sure for ourselves that what we're experiencing is truth and not an illusion."

When we begin to speak of his relationship to Eckankar, McMahon warms up. "A lot of things seem to fade - you know you get into multi-level marketing systems and you get so excited and then all of a sudden, gee this is not really worth it. Eckankar has lasted for me because it's a teaching that's worked. It never presumed, it never made any promises to me, and it never exaggerated anything. It's saying that heaven can be yours, that heaven is yours-for you to take hold of, to grab. Eckankar's sort of like a guidebook to the galaxy. It shows you the way, but it's up to you to do it. Eckankar is not a spiritual welfare program. You are responsible for everything that you do. We believe in the teachings of karma, which is an exact repayment for your deeds, good or bad. You're not supposed to be spending every moment checking your account book to see whether you've been good or bad, but you're training to become aware so that what you're doing is more in service of God rather than of your own personal self."

McMahon generously drives me over to my interview with holistic health practitioner Bettina Yelman, whose Del Mar office is just down the hall from Richards'. Yelman is stunning-tall and extremely thin, clad in a pale beige pant suit, her natural blonde hair pulled back into a bun, the bangs teased like feathers across her forehead. Her enormous eyes seem to sparkle.

Yelman tells me she was born in Germany. "I got sick a lot when I was a baby. I think it was a resistance to being in the physical world and being fully embodied, and so I tried to exit a few times." There is, indeed, something ethereal about this frail woman. When Yelman was six her family moved to Texas. "It was difficult coming to this country, trying to figure out the language, the new culture, and what to do. I had my two sisters to take care of while my parents were being mixed up. There was a lot going on."

She speaks so softly, I move the microphone closer. In Texas a disembodied being began visiting her. "I called him my friend," she continues. "For years he came to me every single day and would teach me, but I never visually saw him except for once ..."

"So you were awake when you had this experience?" I ask, intrigued.

"Totally aware," she says seriously. "It was like in my imagination. I would just close my eyes and he would be there, and I would be there with him too. One time he said, 'I want to take you someplace.' I said, 'Okay!' It was exciting, someplace to go! I remember he took my hand and I could feel it, a concrete thing. We were suddenly in a marketplace with lots of bright burgundy-colored carpets. People were wearing rich, colorful clothing. There was music and noise and clamor, and I turned to look at my friend. He had on a white turban with a gemstone right here in the middle." Yelman points to her bangs. "He was kind of dark complexioned. Once I got into Eckankar I was suspicious that he probably was an Eck Master, but he never really said so."

When Yelman was twelve and she moved with her family to California, the visitations ceased. "In a way it was like an abandonment. I didn't know why it happened. Actually in the moment it was okay, I hardly noticed it. I became a teenager and all this other stuff was grabbing my attention."

I keep looking around at Yelman's office. Everything is mauve and cream: the water cooler, the paper cups, the walls, carpet, chairs, and even the stereo. Yelman's studies at UCSD brought her to San Diego in

1974. Nine years later she read Paul Twitchell's *Eckankar: Key to Secret Worlds*.

"My parents raised me not to write in books, and so I didn't. But he was describing my experiences in his book, and on every single page I just had to make my own notes." As Yelman laughs her stiff angular body quivers with excitement. After reading Eckankar books for a year and a half, Yelman went to a seminar in Las Vegas. "I'm an extremely intuitive person," she says, "so I feel things long before I understand them in my head. As I walked through the hotel lobby, I couldn't see to the other side of the room there was so much smoke, and I'm very sensitive to smoke - yet I felt totally spiritualized."

Though wary of groups, Yelman decided to give Eckankar a try. "When I called to sign up, they told me that I never had to go to a class if I didn't want to. Because that was my condition - if I could just study in the closet then I would join. Aside from the fact that Eckankar has techniques and tools that are incredible and not really matched by other groups, I think the freedom that is allowed to the members is a wonderful thing."

During their first six months of membership new Eckists usually receive what is known as their "first initiation" in the dreamstate. Yelman received hers while at an Eck seminar in Hawaii. "After dinner," she confides, "I walked along the beach and sat down beneath a tree to do a contemplation. This most incredible feeling came over me, literally like light inside of me. The sound current was very loud. Spirit can express itself as sound or as bright or even colored lights. The ocean was rushing ... usually I hear a sound that is like electricity, kind of high pitched, but richer, fuller than just electrical buzzing. Some people who have ringing in their ears say that it's horrible. But this is not oppressive at all. This feels like all the atoms in the universe moving around, it's like a rushing sound in the background.

Anyway, there was an intensification of that, and I knew undoubtedly something was going on. That night in the dreamstate I had a meeting with a master. At the time I didn't know who he was. When I woke up in the morning I had an opportunity to ask questions. Incredibly, I was awake but still in my inner world at the same time. I would ask a question and get an answer, and I would jot it down. I still have those notes. Those answers were so far-reaching in their depth and breadth, they still help me today, nine years later. I asked what happened to my friend, my childhood master. And they said, 'He taught you everything he could teach you, and you agreed that it was complete.' It was so satisfying, it was so true, really true, true to the core of my being."

"So was your childhood teacher an Eck Master?"

Yelman flickers in her pink and cream chair like a pale flame. "He is Shamus-i-Tabriz." [Living Eck Master of 400 years ago who now teaches on the Causal Plane at the Sakapori Temple of Golden Wisdom in the city of Honu.]

"And which Eck Master initiated you?"

"Rebazar Tarzs." she says reverently. "In another lifetime I may have had a connection with Rebazar Tarzs, and so that would be a good way of linking me back in. Same with Shamus-i-Tabriz. I'm also aware that in at least two previous lifetimes I was killed because of my beliefs, specifically in reference to Eckankar, and so I think some of that karma was still sitting heavily on my chest, so to speak."

I'm impressed with Yelman's absolute assurance. "The Living Eck Master gives support and guidance for the things that we choose to do." Yelman pauses for emphasis. "If you were going to visit a new city, wouldn't you want a guide, wouldn't you want to stay away from the places where the prostitutes are, from the dark streets and the hoodlums? When you're traveling you want to have fun; you want to see pretty things. You need a guide who knows the city. The Living Eck Master helps the souls that are embodied here on Earth to gain the spiritual insights that they need to grow and evolve spiritually."

"You must feel very safe."

"I do. I always feel very safe, in the larger scope of things. Something could happen to me, I could have a car accident, but I can grow from that. Lots of quote unquote bad things have happened to me, but my spiritual understanding of them makes a huge difference, so that they're not bad things, they're just things

to help me to learn lessons - and truly that's exactly what's happened. When you define your life as beyond the context of physical reality, suddenly you get a bigger picture, and things aren't frightening any more. You're not nearly as afraid of death, or speaking in front of people, or making mistakes, or whatever. Spirit is always communicating with us, through dreams, through experiences, in contemplation-twenty-four hours a day. Eckankar teaches us how to read the language that spirit uses."

"What part does humility play in your life?"

Yelman grows silent, her eyes filling with emotion. "Humility," she says slowly and determinedly, "is probably the most spiritual lesson that anybody is seeking. If you read Paul's account of the Eck Masters and if you watch Sri Harold you'll see wonderful examples of humility. I don't know if all the students of Eckankar necessarily have mastered it, but when you look at Sri Harold's humility it almost makes you want to cry sometimes. It's unworldly."

Yelman hugs me goodbye, and I take an endless rush hour cab ride to Hillcrest, during which the driver asks me endless questions about Eckankar. He's a friendly guy with lots of dreams of his own, but I just want to stare at the streams of headlights along the highway. When I get home my hosts John and Tom greet me with a Manhattan. I need it.

John exclaims, "Aren't you afraid of those Eckankarists, aren't you afraid what they're going to do when they read your article?" I take a guilty sip of my drink. "No," I sigh, "I'm not afraid of those people."

IL FORNAIO

On Saturday when I lunch with Lane at Il Fornaio in Del Mar, he's wearing the same khaki shorts and sandals as before, but his T-shirt has been replaced with a faded blue and purple plaid polo shirt. I hook my mike over the bread basket and turn on the tape recorder. He tells me he's currently working on a second book about Eckankar, entitled **Gakko Came From Venus: Exploring the Hidden World of Eckankar, an Unauthorized Expedition**.

"But, Dave," I ask in exasperation, "after all this time, why are you persisting?"

"Rarely in life do you ever get to play detective," he says. "That's really what it is for me. I want Eckankar in some weird universe to keep going, because it's fun for me. And I don't mean fun in a mean way, I mean I find Paul to be incredibly imaginative and very interesting to investigate."

It may be a game for Lane, but believers are playing for high emotional and intellectual stakes. Dropping out of a religion, one in which one attempts to focus one's every thought, every action on those teachings, is a horrible experience. Though Eckankar does not try to coerce disillusioned members to remain on the path, Eckists are warned that when they drop out their spiritual growth stops, and they are at the mercy of the Kal, or the negative force of the universe. The Kal is similar to Satan, representing everything that is materialistic and evil, a being of vileness, wrath and vengeance.

For years after I left Eckankar I was plagued with wrenching spasms of primal fear, emptiness, collapse, and betrayal. David Lane's critiques of Eckankar may be well documented and rational, but religious devotion is not about rationality. On an Internet alternative religion bulletin board a former Eckist writes that after reading Lane's book, "I felt as if someone had just torn out my insides and served them to me over rice." Losing one's cult is like losing the love of one's life. The lover has lied to you, but the lover is oh so seductive and satisfying, and submission is so thrilling. It's difficult not to resent Lane, that temptress, that town gossip, that snake in Eden.

"But Eckists are such sweet people," I insist. "Don't you feel like the Great White Hunter attacking the endangered rhinoceros?"

Lane responds with animation. "People always say, 'Leave us alone; Eckankar works.' I do leave those

people alone, I don't go into Eck centers and walk around and say, 'Here read my book.' All I'm saying is that Twitchell was lying to his constituency in a major way. If you want to go and follow a group in which the founder lies to you point blank at every turn, whether it's about the spiritual masters on the inner planes, about his personal life, or about the sources of his information and his books, well fine. Do people get mad at Ralph Nader for saying that a Pinto blows up? Wouldn't you want to know everything you possibly could about the history of this group, and then make your choice? It seems to me I'm doing a huge favor to the Eckists because now they can know what they're joining, and if they've read my book, they've done all the research and if they still think this is for me, then fine. They've made an open-eyed decision."

"There's contradictions and scandals in every religion, Christianity included. Why do you make a point of fingering Eckankar?"

"I do think Christianity has fucked up more people in its history than Eckankar ever has. You're right, every world religion has got its problems. I think it would be wrong of me to say that Eckankar is unique. Let's just say that on a relative scale, Jim Jones and Jonestown is the worst, and that Mother Teresa of Calcutta is the best - in that range Eckankar is kind of in the middle, and I don't think it should rank with the most dangerous of cults. It has its positive aspects, a sense of community, a sense of focusing on the individual and his or her experiences of the divine.

On the negative side, Twitchell's teachings were synthesized without really maturely thinking whether these different teachings fit in together. I think there's some sophomoric techniques, that it's naive in terms of its psychology. Instead of asking people to be really skeptical of things it's asking them to believe almost anything."

"But, Dave," I counter, "when you talk to Eckists they always tell you, 'I'm a totally skeptical person, I don't believe anything until it's proven to me.'"

"I'm sure they said that about Jim Jones; I'm sure they said that in David Koresh's group, Mother Teresa's group. They would say that in any college or institution. You're not going to say, 'Well I'm a dumb shit. My group is for dumb shits. Everybody has an IQ of 80 or lower ... uuurrrrrrrrr, let's go, let's start a religion.'"

Our pizza arrives, and Lane politely allows me to take the first piece. I ask, "How do you account for Eckankar's success?"

"Eckankar uses two things that everybody has to have. That is, people have to find meaning in their lives, regardless. Second, everybody has to dream at night, or most people dream at night, and Eckists dream about Fubbi Quantz or Rebazar Tarzs or Paul Twitchell. I dream about all these guys myself, because if you study the stuff long enough ... I see Eck masters, I see Radhasoami masters, I see Rebazar Tarzs and Sudar Singh. But it's my vivid imagination, the projections of my own mind, my own day to day experiences. I don't give them any value. But if I belonged to an organization that did, I'd really start believing I'd had a spiritual experience, I'd wake up feeling like, 'Wow!' Eckankar works because it doesn't make you have experiences that are impossible to have."

"What about soul travel, visiting higher planes of existence?"

Lane swallows his pizza. "I am skeptical of paranormal claims because I believe we need to shave more with Occam's razor."

"Occam's razor?"

"The principle of competing theories, developed in the 14th Century by a guy named William of Occam, who said that if you have competing theories, go for the simplest theory first - if it explains the issue fully. An example: I claim the reason I missed our appointment last night was because Elvis was on Venus and sucked me up into a space capsule. That's one explanation. The other one is I overslept. Among

those two explanations, Occam's razor points to the simpler one: I overslept.

The problem is that nobody uses Occam's razor when it comes to spirituality. We have a tendency to want to inflate our lives with spiritual meaning, and skepticism is not much fun. A skeptic goes to an Eckankar meeting, or anybody's meditation meeting, and says, 'Well, now wait a second, are you sure you saw the astral body of Rami Nuri? Maybe it was just some neurons firing in the right part of your brain, or maybe you had too much dopamine in the frontal lobes, or maybe you took an Excedrin four hours ago.' We don't want that kind of explanation."

It's a beautiful, sunny day. Sitting at our outside table, high above Camino Del Mar, surrounded by sky and ocean, I feel as if we're gods feasting on petty human concerns. I swallow my pizza and ask, ever so casually, "Is it true that you have some friends who are Eckists?"

"Oh, yeah."

"How do they justify that you are doing things that might damage the group?"

"They differentiate the message from the medium. They say, the message works for me, the contemplation works for me. Paul Twitchell's the past - we've evolved out of that. They say you can never damage the Eck spirit because it's life. So, I may be damaging the organization, but the real essence of Eckankar is not the organization, it's the Eck, that inner spirit."

"How did you meet these people?"

"They read my book. One interesting guy I met was Jerry Mulvin. He was a pro-bowler as well as a higher initiate in Eckankar. In 1979 he called me from Northridge, where he was living at his girlfriend's aunt's house. He'd read the book and wanted me to visit him. After I'd talked to him for a couple of hours, Jerry said, 'Dave, why don't you start your own religion? With all this information you have, you could start your own thing.'

I go, 'Jerry, I can't do that - third eye patch, turban, the flowing robe - I can't do it.'

Two years later I got a letter from a guy in Canada saying he'd discovered a genuine guru. So I asked, 'Who is this enlightened being?' It was Jerry Mulvin! He off-shooted from Eckankar and founded this religion called the Divine Science of Light and Sound. He's now in Scottsdale, Arizona. For a hundred bucks per year he gives you the divine connection. If he can't take your soul back to God, he improves your bowling game, money back guarantee."

We both laugh so loudly the couple at the next table who have been covertly eyeing the tape recorder, stare at us openly.

"I wrote to Jerry, I go, *Jerry!* Two years ago you were living at your girlfriend's aunt's house, not making much money on the pro-bowling scene, and now you're God."

"And what was Jerry's response?"

Lane rolls his eyes. "Classic. He said, 'Some of us live the spiritual life, others intellectualize it. Signed, The Master.'

Another former Eckist named Gary Olsen started the MasterPath. He's touring the southwest, as we speak. Another man named 'Sri' Michael Turner, in Tucson, claims to be the 974th Living Master of the Midnight Sun. I keep discovering more and more offshoots, in India as well as here - it's like an ebolo virus, it keeps reproducing itself."

"You know the ins and outs of how religions are organized, and you're a charismatic person - Jerry Mulvin's suggestion that you start your own cult must have been intriguing on some level. I bet you've fantasized about it. Do you think it would be an easy thing to do?"

Lane gives me a big grin. "Well, yes ... I've always thought that as a sociological experiment it would be a lot of fun to create your own religion. I wouldn't do it myself because I have too many skeletons in my closet. The skeletons would just keep coming out and coming out. Some old girlfriend would come

over, 'Hey wait a minute.' I don't need a Paul Twitchell scenario. Also I wouldn't do it because it plays too much on people's ultimate vulnerability. But in my lurid imagination I've always thought, how would you pull this thing off?"

Lane needs a bit of prompting. "How would you do it?"

"People aren't doing it the right way, I can tell you that much. First of all, I'd pick a woman as the leader. There's not enough women taking advantage of the market."

What about me I think. I imagine a new religion in which I, Dodie Bellamy, would be exalted as the 974th Living Mistress of the Mystical Surf. I'd live in a mansion in Del Mar and have cute boys in short-shorts polishing my Lexus. I'd wear body-hugging white robes and jewel-studded sandals.

"Number two, you don't charge any money because you'll make tremendous amounts of money by not charging money. What you say is, 'This is completely free.' The more you keep saying that, you're going to get people who feel really good about you. Precisely at that point you have people set up donation funds for other activities, which people voluntarily give to.

"Thirdly, you create a hierarchy - you know, levels, initiations. Eckankar does this really well. Scientology does it even better. People love hierarchies; they love status. You may be a loser in the real world, but if you join this cult and all of a sudden you're some ninth honcho, it really gives you a sense of meaning, of purpose - and a sense of power. In our day to day society unless you have the money, education, political connections, you don't have much power. You're just part of a big huge clog. But in these associative groups, these mini-universes, boy, you can become addicted. So the more you have this tier level, the more people will stay within your group.

"Then of course you come up with secret esoteric teachings, which I would synthesize but not plagiarize. You totally acknowledge your sources. But then I'd say that in my trip in 1978 - because everybody knows I went to India in '78, meeting all these gurus - I'd say that I met somebody I never talked about and that I found his secret manuscript which reveals the secrets to life. However, it's been ordained that only the first chapter be printed before the turn of the millennium. The other twenty chapters, will have to wait. You get all this interest, "Wow!" You come out with the other chapters later. It's a marketing device."

The waiter arrives with our check, and Lane and I bicker over who's going to pay for it. Nobody wins, so we just let it sit there. Lane's still a member of Radhasoami, but he's been reticent to talk about it beyond mentioning that his guru Charan Singh's death in 1990 has thrown him into a state of crisis. Other students of Radhasoami have objected to Lane's critical stance in *The Radhasoami Tradition: A Critical History of Guru Successorship* (Garland Publishing, Inc.). Clearly Lane is not a blind follower, but I'm amazed that, after all the dirt he's dug up on religions, he could seriously be involved in any spiritual path. I ask him how his research into cults has affected his own beliefs.

"My research has helped because it's made me more discriminating, more critical-minded. At this stage of the game I can't buy the crap that permeates religion, not just new religions, but religion in general. There's so much shit. I only accept that thing which I can verify or that thing which I consider to be somewhat genuine. I think of Rumi, the great Persian poet, who said, with all these false coins abounding there's got to be something genuine in the midst of it."

Again, I am reminded of Houdini, whose interest in spiritualism was awakened with his dearly-loved mother's death. Houdini longed to communicate with her beyond the grave. But, whereas his friend Arthur Conan Doyle and other enthusiasts were impressed with mediums' supernatural sideshows, Houdini, with his vast knowledge of magic techniques, could duplicate the effects. He took to unmasking frauds, but always with the hopes of finding a true medium. In *The Life and Many Deaths of Harry Houdini*, Ruth Brandon writes, "He terribly wanted to be convinced. That he could not be, was his tragedy." I wonder if this is not Lane's tragedy too. I ask gently, "Dave, what do you believe?"

"I'm a mystical agnostic materialist. What it means is that I ultimately don't know. And in my unknowingness I like to explore how much more I don't know."

"Is this a scary position?"

"I love it. I love unknowingness."

"Talking to these Eckists the conscious, rational, jaded Dodie faded out, and this other little Dodie inside me was starting to feel an incredible seduction. I wanted Bettina Yelman's calm, I wanted Charles Richards' benevolence, I wanted Kevin McMahon's assurance. I like you and I'm enjoying our talk, but nothing you're saying is very seductive. Do you know what I mean?"

"When my philosophy students come in and we talk, everybody wants to know the secret of life. And I want to give them the secret, but I don't know it. You're saying that my sense of unknowingness, my sense of skepticism, isn't glamorous or enticing. To be quite frank with you, I loved my guru beyond description. I didn't call him my guru, I called him my friend, because guru has such a weird, master/slave connotation. He was a beautiful person, and I don't know anything beyond that. To me it was very tangible, very real going to India and seeing him work with the poor in the hospitals and feed the masses. Everybody was happy just to see him. And when he died my dreams ..." Lane makes a downward, crashing movement with his hand then looks into my eyes so woefully my heart goes out to him.

"Everybody wants to see their guru, their teacher as God," he continues. "I'm quite the opposite. I'm the one guy who wants to see him pick his nails. I'm the guy who wants to see him eat a jellabi. I'm the guy who wants to see a tear in his eye. I want to see the humanness. That's what I love. I don't know anything about God.

I'm the guy who doesn't believe, but who is extraordinarily religious. Sometimes when people talk about their religion, I love it and I want all of it, and I'm there, but I can't believe. It's like the square peg doesn't fit no more, because the answer is less than what I know the truth must be. I know it's a lie, I know it's a con. We don't want to face that people die of AIDS. My brother, whom I loved dearly, died of a heart attack three years ago, out of the blue. My dad died of a heart attack. My best friend died. People talk about mythology and spirituality and astral planes and all that crap, but, man, this place sucks. I don't give a shit who created it. I don't care what planes there are. When I see somebody in Bombay sitting on a little towel begging, who's got elephantitis, who's got pockmarks on his face, and nobody pays attention to him, the world sucks. Bottom line. I want to believe, but I can't. It's a real drag."

Lane drives me back to Hillcrest, and we part with gifts. I give him my new book, and he gives me a rare copy of the 1983 edition of *The Making of a Spiritual Movement*, the one with the banned no-smoking sign on the cover. "Sign it," I urge. He writes, "To my friend for a lovely 2 days of conversation. Thanks - the Kal force, Dave." The Kal force, remember, is the power of negativity. Lane can be such a card.

The following evening, when the airport shuttle drops me off in front of my San Francisco apartment, five guys are smoking crack beside a dumpster. It's hard to leave the magical vistas of Del Mar. It was hard to leave Eckankar too. And it's hard to write this article. I turn on the stereo and stare out the window. Rosanne Cash sings, "Some dreams die with dignity. They fade out clean and quietly. But some won't let you let 'em go." It's raining. In her Golden-tongued wisdom Rosanne Cash continues to sing, "A cold hard rain comes pouring down. It wasn't like this last time around. There's no calm center to this storm." And it continues to rain. In January, while I'm working on this article it rains twenty-six days in San Francisco. The skies themselves seem to be weeping with loss.

DARWIN GROSS

Just when I thought this story was over, a new development pops up, like the arm jutting from the grave at the end of *Carrie*. Lane tells me that former Living Eck Master Darwin Gross is appearing February 11 at the Best Western Hanalei Hotel. Every thriller these days has a false ending and then a real

ending, to the point that when I watch a pre-Carrie film I am disappointed at how easily chaos is defeated. With some trepidation, I return to San Diego, exhausted from two months' immersion in religion. I have a nightmare in which Lane and I go to the wedding reception of a couple we do not know, and Lane abandons me.

The mastership of Darwin Gross is a black cloud in Eckankar history, a history that Eckankar wants to erase. Nowhere in any of the Eckankar press materials is Gross mentioned. I wonder how long it takes new Eckists to even learn of his existence. When word got round that I was doing this article, I got an odd phone call from Don Ginn, the California Regional Eck Spiritual Aid. He didn't bring up David Lane, but he requested that I not dwell on Darwin Gross. Sorry, Don - I really wasn't planning to write about him.

Gross' rise to power was steeped in controversy from the beginning. When Paul Twitchell suddenly died in September, 1971, he left no word as to who his successor should be. Then his widow, Gail Atkinson, had a vision in the night in which Twitchell named Gross. In October, at a seminar in Las Vegas, Gross was revealed to be the new Living Eck Master when Atkinson walked over to him and handed him a blue carnation.

Gross actually received the mantleship on the inner planes when he was handed, not a flower, but the Rod of Power. Various Eckists say they witnessed the ceremony. (In one illustration the Rod of Power is depicted as a glowing white wand. When a group of Eckists and I went to see the Bloomington, Indiana premiere of **Star Wars** we were thrilled by the light sabers of the Jedi knights. They looked just like the Rod of Power! To top it off, their white helmets bore an insignia that was remarkably similar to Eckankar's circular EK logo. *Star Wars* was no ordinary action flick, we concluded, but a profound spiritual saga. "May the Force be with you.")

Since Gross had been in Eckankar less than two years, his appointment shocked and disturbed many Eckists. Some left the movement. A few months later Gross and Twitchell's widow married, sending more ripples of confusion throughout the fold. Not long afterwards I joined Eckankar, unaware of the dissension that was brewing. Whenever I saw Gross and Atkinson I would be seated in an auditorium, surrounded by thousands of avid followers, each hoping at some point to receive the darshan, the Master's gaze. Gross was in the habit of wearing light blue leisure suits, and men throughout the audience mimicked his attire. Outsiders would think they had stumbled into a convention of traveling salesmen.

My husband, who had never heard of Atkinson before I started writing this article, sees her as a kind of sixties super-vixen, like Pussy Galore. But the woman I remember was mousy with a broad smile; no Bond girl was she, Ellen Burstyn, *maybe*. I raised my head to the stage in rapt silence, devouring every word the Grosses spoke. I could almost picture the legendary Rod of Power in Darwin's hand. They were gods to me - and one doesn't question the mating patterns of gods. Gross and Gail Twitchell divorced in 1978.

In October, 1981, Eckists were again floored with Gross announced his resignation as the Living Eck Master, but not without first signing a contract which gave him a salary of \$65,000 for life, as well as full medical and dental coverage, use of a company car, and entertainment expenses. His new title was President of Eckankar. The Rod of Power was passed on to Harold Klemp. Within two years Klemp fired Gross, accusing him of negativity, spiritual decay, and embezzlement.

"Apparently," says Lane, "Darwin took \$2.5 million and put it into a front corporation in Oregon called Dharma Corporation. He basically took Eckankar's money, while saying it was really for Eckankar purposes."

Excommunicated from Eckankar, his lifetime agreement terminated, Gross was suddenly penniless. His books were suppressed, and he was forbidden to associate himself with Eckankar or Eckankar teaching in any way, including the use of trademark terms such as Eck, EK, Living Eck Master, and Eckankar. When Gross protested, he was slapped with a lawsuit for business impropriety and copyright infringement.

Gross continues to work as a spiritual master, with a small group of devoted followers, many of them former Eckists. He publishes books through an organization called **Be Good to Your Self**, located in Las Vegas. Home study discourses and musical tapes are also available. Much of Gross' current teachings

center around the easy-listening jazz he performs on the vibes. Gross' uplifting music is claimed to have miraculous healing powers. The program Lane and I attend at the Best Western Hanalei is called "The Universal Basics of Life Through Music." It costs \$35 at the door.

Saturday afternoon when we arrive at the Hawaiian-themed hotel with photographer David Allen, Lane keeps disappearing into the bathroom. He and Gross have been sparring since 1977. As late as December, 1993, Gross sent out a memo to all his readers defending Paul Twitchell and "the corporation he started" against Lane's attacks. Gross' fastidious avoidance of the copyrighted term "Eckankar" is noticeably awkward and circuitous. Lane has countered with a point by point rebuttal, "When God Responds: Sri Darwin Gross versus David Lane," which he's including in his new book *Gakko Came From Venus*.

While Lane is in the bathroom, Allen and I try, to no avail, to get permission to photograph the event. Gross' assistant, Dawn, explains, "Frankly, there have been lawsuits." She agrees to provide Allen with an official photograph of Gross at the vibes, and I leave to find Lane. He's sitting on a couch in the small lobby outside the conference room, looking more boyish than ever in forest green shorts, tan canvas shirt, white velcro-fastened running shoes, and crew socks. I've attempted a more professional effect-black linen skirt, muted teal silk jacket and black ankle boots. I look like a temp, like a very good temp. Since Lane doesn't budge from the couch, I urge, "Come on, Dave, it's starting." I practically have to pull him into the concert.

We take our seats among the fifty or so other seekers, many of whom have flown in for the event. Gross's young perky assistant, Dawn, is finishing an applied kinesiology demonstration of the power of Gross's music. A volunteer raises one arm straight out to the side, and Dawn easily pushes it down. Then she asks him to think about Gross' music as he again holds out his arm. This time the arm doesn't budge no matter how hard she pushes down on it. "See!" she exclaims. We close our eyes and chant Hu together for several minutes. I feel shy about doing this while seated next to Lane, knowing he'll be able to hear how off-key I am against the general harmonics of the room.

Gross enters and takes his position behind the gold-toned vibes. Remembering him in his better days, thin and attractive, I am shocked by the corpulent aging man standing before me, coughing. He reminds me of the bloated near-death Elvis, only fatter and older. He jokes about his "Nevada cold," blaming it on the dust from the Indian burial grounds being dug up to build housing. Lane looks like he's swallowed a mouse, grinning and biting his finger. Gross' movements are frail and slow as he removes his dark blue jacket to reveal a short-sleeved white shirt and tan pants held up with wide red suspenders. Accompanied by key boardist and devotee, Ron Kurz, Gross begins with "Blues in E Flat." The music is great, lethargic and soothing, the kind of music one should listen to in a cocktail lounge with an umbrellaed drink. Gross smiles to himself as he hits the vibes. He seems gently ecstatic, but so tired. When he finishes the song, he takes off his shoes "to be closer to the keys." The atmosphere in the room is homey and protective.

After a couple more tunes, Gross and Kurz are joined by vocalist Kim Driggs, an attractive woman with dark shaggy hair. In a husky voice smooth as malt whiskey she sings, "Don't blame me for falling in love with you. I'm under your spell, but how can I help it." There is a double edge to this torch song-from the way she keeps glancing affectionately over at Gross, it is the Master's spell that Driggs can't be blamed for falling under. When she begins her next selection, "My Funny Valentine," I lose all objectivity. Valentine's Day, my birthday, is only three days away. I vacantly stare at Lane's tanned hairy legs, nostalgic for the boyfriends who played this song for me. The loss of my old loves and Gross' loss of status become merged in an ineffable sadness. After she finishes, Gross says, "She can belt one out, can't she? I hope you all had your seatbelts fastened."

Even more moving is Driggs' rendition of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." Gross sits this one out on a rattan stool, his arms folded over his huge stomach, lost in thought. When Driggs gets to the line "way above the chimney tops, that's where you'll find me," I focus on Gross' bulbous belly and red suspenders. He looks like Santa, I think, like a fallen Santa. Lane has tears in his eyes. I lean against his arm and whisper, "You are so opaque." I am surprised by my cruelty. Sitting in this pathetic room with its riotously floral turquoise and purple carpet, it feels as if nobody's dreams will ever come true.

I keep waiting for Gross to give a speech, but he never does. We zone out on lounge music for an hour

and a half, then Dawn walks to the front of the room and says, "That's it." I ask Lane if he's going to introduce himself. Lane shakes his head. "I don't want to tweak his day. He's got his music. He's having a good time."

So, I walk over to Gross myself and shake his hand. "I used to be in Eckankar," I tell him. Discomfort spreads across his face as I continue, "You were the Master most of the time I was in it." Holding my hand he looks deep into my eyes and says, "I'm still the Master. I always have been. I never stopped, not even for a minute - even though they, pardon my expression, treated me like shit." As I walk away he yells after me, "Hang in there!"

Sri Harold Klemp has immense financial resources available to guide the spiritual lives of his tens of thousands of believers. Gail Atkinson, who has long since broken with Eckankar, is said to live in wealthy seclusion in Palm Springs.

Lane and I drive over to La Jolla for leaden upscale Mexican food. Sipping his virgin strawberry margarita, Lane says, "I got a sense of authenticity when he played his vibes, like that's who he really was, a musician, instead of trying to be a master. One of the reasons he may have relinquished his spiritual role to Harold is that it didn't jive with him. He may like the trappings, but not the actual duty of it. I really enjoyed the music, but it was kind of sad. Life's kind of sad. Forty people in a hotel named Hanalei in San Diego for a man who used to draw thousands. He's big, coughing, not in the best of health, and he doesn't have any money. Yet it has a sweetness to it. It was like an outpost of spirituality. I felt the world has gone by but these people are still there."

After another ten minutes of equally banal comments on both sides, I turn off the tape recorder and Lane and I launch into a painfully personal conversation. It's the intimacy of the trenches - after the ordeal of witnessing Gross' tragic descent, both of us are battle-scarred, punchy.

"How are your flautas?" I ask.

"A dip in the darkness," laughs Lane. "They're Darwin's revenge." Lane pays the bill and we walk over to a candy store for fudge, then over to Starbuck's for orange spice tea. Lane unwraps the fudge, which is extremely soft. We eat it by scooping off globs with our fingers, giggling like a couple of gradeschool kids how "it looks like number two."



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CHAPTER THREE

The Genealogical Connection:

Kirpal Singh, Paul Twitchell, and Eckankar

That religions often evolve out of other past religions is a well known phenomenon: witness Christianity's emergence from Judaism. What is not so well known, however, is how certain religions try to genealogically dissociate themselves from their historical roots. Eckankar is a classic case in point.

Founded in 1965 by Paul Twitchell, one-time disciple of Swami Premananda, Kirpal Singh and L. Ron Hubbard, Eckankar owes much of its theology to Radhasoami. Indeed, as Lane, Melton, and others have pointed out, most of Paul Twitchell's writings are derived from two Radhasoami publications, **With a Great Master in India** and **The Path of the Masters** (both authored by Julian P. Johnson in the 1930s). Certainly, it is not surprising that religious doctrines can at times appear to be similar, but what is surprising is when a religion which has borrowed much of its history, doctrine, and terminology from another tries to consciously deny its putative association.

The story of Paul Twitchell's association with Kirpal Singh, and, in turn, the influence of Radhasoami on Eckankar, is well documented. In 1955 Paul Twitchell received initiation from Kirpal Singh in Washington, D.C. Twitchell, who, according to his first wife Camille Ballowe Taylor, was a "seeker of religion," met Kirpal Singh after a five year stay at Swami Premananda's Church of Absolute Monism.

Twitchell kept up a ten year correspondence with Kirpal Singh in India, addressing his numerous letters to his guru as "My Dear Master," and so on. In 1963 when Kirpal Singh visited America for the second time, Twitchell brought his second wife to be, Gail Atkinson, to get initiated in San Francisco. The initiation records of both Paul and Gail are on file at Sawan-Kirpal Ashram in Vijay Nagar, Delhi.

Although Paul Twitchell and Kirpal Singh were on friendly terms, there arose a rift between them in the mid-1960s. Apparently, Twitchell sent a manuscript version of his book, *The Tiger's Fang*, for Kirpal Singh's approval. Kirpal Singh, however, did not agree with some of the things Twitchell said in his manuscript. Subsequently, Twitchell severed his ties with Kirpal Singh and demanded that his manuscript be returned. In the meantime, Twitchell began advertising for his new spiritual group called **Eckankar: The Ancient Science of Soul Travel**.

What really prompted Twitchell to disconnect from Kirpal Singh has been speculated upon by a number of scholars. Critics contend that it was due to money and that Twitchell wanted to start his own ministry, unencumbered by the fetters of restrictive Indian moral systems. Followers of Eckankar, on the other hand, contend that Twitchell was a spiritual trailblazer who had been divinely commissioned by the "Vairagi" masters to carry on the eternal "Eck" teachings. Whatever one may suspect about Twitchell's motives, one thing is certain: Eckankar draws heavily upon the teachings of Kirpal Singh and other shabd yoga masters for its theology.

Even the very name "Eckankar" is derived from Julian Johnson's use of the term in *The Path of the Masters*. **Ek** in Hindi means one; **Onkar** means God or Transcendental. Combine the two and you have a popular Sikh name for God, which is mentioned in Guru Nanak's 15th century poem, Japji. Twitchell most likely learned of the name from both Julian Johnson's book as well as from the Sikh scripture. Twitchell simply added a "c" between the E and the k to develop his own unique spelling and to give his organization's name an identifiable distinction. Moreover, Twitchell intertwined Radhasoami doctrines with other teachings he had encountered in his career, including Theosophy, Self-Realization Fellowship, Scientology, and Occult teachings in general.

The result is a fascinating mixture of Eastern and Western mysticism. Twitchell's creation (or revelation, depending upon one's appraisal) was a huge success. Today, some twenty-four years after its founder's death, Eckankar remains one of the most successful spiritual movements in the world.

of the 1960s. Eckankar has followers all over the world and numbers its adherents in the tens of thousands (official numbers have yet to be released by the Eckankar organization).

* * *

Eckankar has also seen its share of controversies. When Paul Twitchell died, he was succeeded by **Darwin Gross** who assumed the title of "Living Eck Master." Gross was appointed by Twitchell's widow, Gail, after she claims to have had a dream where she saw the transference of power. Several months later Gail and Darwin got married only to be divorced in the late 1970s.

In 1981, Darwin Gross decided to step down and appointed Harold Klemp as his successor. In his resignation, Gross claimed that he was still the "Mahanta" but not the "Living Eck Master." However, just two years later Gross was stripped of even that title when Harold Klemp excommunicated him from Eckankar altogether and banned the sale of all Gross related publications. The early 1980s was a time of turmoil for Eckankar, but today in the 1990s it has weathered the storm and has witnessed a steady increase in its membership. Though Eckankar started originally in San Diego, it has moved its center of operations several times: to Las Vegas to Menlo Park and finally to its present site in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Eckankar has also had a long history of trying to come to grips with its Radhasoami roots. In the 1970s a number of scholars alleged that Twitchell tried to cover-up his association with previous real-life gurus by creating "cover" names. For instance, in his earlier publications for such magazines as **Orion**, **Psychic Observer**, and **Search**, Twitchell profusely mentions the names of Sawan Singh, Kirpal Singh, and other well known spiritual leaders. However, after he started Eckankar he redacted those names when he reprinted his earlier articles in new books. Twitchell did not change the story or the text, as such, but rather switched names: from Kirpal Singh to "Sudar" Singh; from Swami Premananda to "Rebazar Tarzs"; from the Holy Bible to "The Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad." What Twitchell was attempting to do is fairly obvious: he was trying to rewrite his biography so that it could dovetail with the antiquity of Eckankar's rich (if invented) mythology. In doing so, however, Twitchell had to deny his Radhasoami roots. Why? Because Twitchell wanted Eckankar to be an autonomous tradition which stood apart from his shabd yoga cousins. The only glitch, however, is that it was these very cousins which informed and shaped Eckankar's theology.

Radhasoami's influence in America has most likely seen its greatest impact through the teachings of Eckankar. Whereas Radhasoami has limited appeal to Westerners because of its strict moral codes and exotic Indian terminology, Eckankar has done away with many of the more rigid ethical considerations inherent in shabd yoga (from vegetarianism to sexual abstinence, etc.) and tried to make its image more palpable to an audience interested in having "out of body" experiences, or what Eckists like to term "soul travel." Moreover, Eckankar charges money for its services and advertises extensively in the print media and occasionally on radio and on television. Eckankar is in many ways an Americanized version of Radhasoami mixed with Theosophy and Scientology. To thousands of Eckists (as members are often referred to) around the world, it is an irresistible combination.

What is most intriguing about the transfusion of Radhasoami ideas into Eckankar is how certain key concepts get transformed when transplanted from one group to another. The following is a close look at the Radhasoami/Eckankar transfusion.

Living Eck Master

One of the strong selling points in Radhasoami is its emphasis on the "living" master. All Radhasoami groups go to great lengths to argue that a living master is necessary for enlightenment and that past prophets and saints are of absolutely no value in the ultimate salvation/liberation of the soul. Eckankar shares this belief with its shabd yoga counterparts, but differs significantly in how much respect and adoration is shown to their leader. In Radhasoami circles the guru is seen as God incarnated on earth. Thus satsangis display tremendous amounts of respect to their respective gurus. In some instances, disciples have been known to drink their guru's saliva, drink water that has touched his/her feet, and eaten dust

where he/she has walked. There is an almost bodily worship of the guru in Radhasoami.

In Eckankar this is not the case. To be sure, Eckists have high regard for their leader and show him the utmost deference, but they do not on the whole "worship" him in the ways that satsangis "worship" their guru. One of the reasons for this difference may stem in part from Twitchell's differentiation of the outer and inner master. The outer master in Eckankar is for all intents and purposes a human vehicle, replete with its limitations; the inner master, sometimes called the "Mahanta," however, is not limited and is a direct link with the infinite. Although outer and inner master are connected, their ultimate functions are distinct. Eckists on the whole are clear about the limitations of their "outer" masters; satsangis, on the other hand, are not, believing as they do that their particular guru is Supreme in all ways.

Soul Travel

All of the Radhasoami branches speak at length about "leaving the body at will" or "dying while living" or "going within." Kirpal Singh, in particular, laid special emphasis on experiencing "above body consciousness" and seeing inner light and hearing inner sound. Indeed, he buttressed his claims for mastership by stating univocally that only a competent master could offer inner glimpses at the very time of initiation.

Paul Twitchell seems to have been fascinated with out-of-body experiences. Most of his early 1960s articles, just prior to the founding of Eckankar, talk about "bilocation" or the ability to be in two places at the same time. By the time he started Eckankar in 1965, Twitchell had coined a term called "soul travel" to describe in a nutshell what his path was all about. Although it is clear that Twitchell learned of "soul travel" from his association with Swami Premananda and Kirpal Singh, in developing Eckankar he modified the term to represent something a bit different than what his original teachers had in mind.

In Radhasoami meditation practice, for example, emphasis is placed on achieving out-of-body experiences while one is conscious. Thus any experiences that are derived during unconscious processes, like dreams and such, are not given much credence. However, the chief method by which Twitchell "soul traveled" was by sleeping and having dreams. In his numerous letters to Kirpal Singh, Twitchell repeatedly mentions how he left his body after lying down and going to sleep. Dreams for Twitchell were the gateway to other worlds. Kirpal Singh was suspicious of this modus operandi because in his tradition dreams are extremely unreliable and may not necessarily indicate a higher state of consciousness but rather a lower one. It was precisely on this point that Kirpal Singh critiqued Twitchell's manuscript, **The Tiger's Fang**, and which eventually led to their irresolvable rift.

To achieve out-of-body experiences during the waking state is a very difficult thing, according to Radhasoami practitioners. To achieve such during dreaming is much more easy, even if much more suspect and unreliable. That Twitchell emphasized the latter and not the former (in Radhasoami an initiate is enjoined to spend not less than two and a half hours in meditation daily; in Eckankar the "chela," as students are called, are enjoined to do about twenty minutes daily of spiritual exercises) proved to be one of the great attractions of Eckankar to new seekers. Since almost everybody dreams, the relative "success" rate of Eckists is bound to be much higher than those in Radhasoami, where only "waking" experiences are given value.

Whether Twitchell consciously realized this as a marketing tool is unclear, but it is certain that it contrasted dramatically with Kirpal Singh's teachings. Thus today dreaming is perhaps the central way for Eckists to "experience" the truth of their path. The present leader Harold Klemp when describing most of his inner experiences bases them upon his dream excursions. Eckists have also followed suit.

The Vairagi Masters

As we have seen in the early history of Radhasoami, lineage is an important legitimizing factor in substantiating the claims of a would-be successor or master. Almost all Radhasoami gurus try to link their putative role with the orders of their predecessors. Radhasoami gurus, in general, never try to claim that they are masters because of their own efforts (with the possible exception of Shiv Dayal Singh, but that's another issue). Rather, they view themselves as a link in a sacred parampara (guru lineage).

When Twitchell founded Eckankar he likewise attempted to connect his efforts with previous masters. But instead of directly linking with his real-life gurus, like Kirpal Singh and L. Ron Hubbard, Twitchell

instead "invented" his ancient lineage entitled the "Vairagi" masters. He claimed that there were 970 masters which had preceded him. The very first master in this tradition was "Gakko" who brought the true teachings of Eckankar from the city of Retz on the planet Venus some six million years ago. Other masters in this pantheon include "Rama," "Jagat Ho," "Yaubl Sacabi," and "Fubbi Quantz."

In the modern era the two previous masters before Twitchell were "Rebazar Tarzs," a five-hundred year old monk who still resides in the Himalayan mountains, and "Sudar Singh," a shabd yoga teacher who resided in Allahabad until in his death in the late 1930s. Several scholars have argued that both Rebazar Tarzs and Sudar Singh are cover names for certain Sant Mat masters, like Sawan Singh and Kirpal Singh. Indeed, Twitchell himself never mentions either Rebazar or Sudar before 1964 in any of his published writings, but does profusely mention Kirpal Singh, L. Ron Hubbard, and others.

What was Twitchell attempting to do when he developed (or invented, depending upon your affiliation) the "Vairagi" master concept? Most likely it was a way to legitimize his own role as "The Living Eck Master." It is one thing to claim all by yourself that you are enlightened; it is a lot more impressive, though, to have hundreds of masters preceding you who back up and contextualize your claim. Clearly Twitchell did not wish to serve as merely a disciple of Kirpal Singh or a one-time student and press agent of L. Ron Hubbard and Scientology (which he was in the latter part of the 1950s). Twitchell believed that he was a gifted master in his own right. However, instead of acknowledging his previous association with other gurus, he instead denied them and created a biography that is filled with dubious gurus with curious sounding names.

In his study of Eckankar, for instance, Lane has never found any historical evidence to suggest that Sudar Singh is, in fact, a real person. The same is true, he claims, about Rebazar Tarzs. The evidence for such beings simply does not exist. Lane, therefore, contends that these masters serve as a way for Twitchell to invoke a double sense of mystery and antiquity, a sense in which Eckankar is connected not to a real historical past (one that can be discerned by scholars) but to a unique mythological one.² It is a past that is exclusively Eckankar's; it is also a past which has been trademarked and legally protected in the United States.

Conscious co-worker with Sugmad

In his first books on Eckankar Twitchell used standard Radhasoami cosmology to describe the inner spiritual planes. He also used shabd yoga terminology in ways quite similar to their original usage. Over time, though, Twitchell began to redefine many Radhasoami and shabd yoga terms when he used them in Eckankar. An interesting example is his use of Kirpal Singh's often repeated phrase (derived in part from Sant Mat and Sikhism) about being a conscious "co-worker" with God. In Kirpal Singh's theology, the ultimate realization is when the soul merges back with God and becomes one with Him/Her/It. Twitchell also accepts that a disciple must reach the highest plane of consciousness to be "God-realized."

He differs with his predecessor, however, over the ultimate ontological status of the soul. Whereas Kirpal Singh and Radhasoami argue for a merging in God and a subsequent losing of one's individuality, Twitchell opts for an eternal permanence of the individual which keeps him or her distinct from the ultimate annihilation. Indeed, this is one of the bedrock doctrines in Eckankar's theology and one which they highlight to accentuate their differences with Eastern mysticism. Although Twitchell uses the Kirpal Singh's phrase "conscious co-worker" he defines it along a more dualistic and Westernized fashion. This is quite significant because it demonstrates that Eckankar is not merely a recapitulation of Radhasoami or shabd yoga, but rather a creative mixture of many mystical ideas and often with a Western slant.

Thus even though the influence of Radhasoami on Eckankar as a whole is tremendous, it must be kept in mind that many of its doctrines have been transfigured in their Western landscape. Perhaps this is the fate of all religions, to some degree, which evolve over time. They get nuanced in ways that are not prefigured when first developed. Eckankar's radical re-interpretation of Radhasoami suggests that religion is always in the process of being co-opted by its successors in ways that may seem entirely incongruent at first. It also suggests that religious ideas are quite fluid and dynamic.

The Inner Planes

Radhasoami has a complex cosmology concerning the physical, mental, and spiritual universes. Following the lead of previous gurus in the Sant tradition, Shiv Dayal Singh described five inner planes (Sahans-dal-Kanwal, Trikuti, Daswan Dwar, Bhanwar Gupha, and Sach Khand) which a soul must pass in order to reach its ultimate destination. Shiv Dayal Singh has also at times given slight nuances to this basic five plane cosmology, with the two major variations concerning the region between Daswan Dwar and Bhanwar Gupha, known as Maha Sunn (the great darkness), and the further subdivisions of Sach Khand, which he calls Alakh, Agam, and Anami. In the various Radhasoami branches in India there has been debate over some of these more rarified distinctions, but overall there is general agreement on the major features of the inner planes. Below are three of the most popular and commonly agreed upon versions:

Radhasoami Cosmologies

Version #1: common in Beas related groups	Version #2: common in Beas related groups	Version #3: common in Agra related groups, particularly Soami Bagh
1. Sahans-dal Kanwal (lit. "thousand petalled lotus;" astral region)	1. Sahans- dal- Kanwal	1. Sahans-dal-Kanwal
2. Trikuti (lit., "three prominences;" casual region)	2. Trikuti	2. Trikuti
3. Daswan Dwar (lit., "tenth door;" beyond mind)	3. Daswan Dwar	3. Daswan Dwar
4. Bhanwar Gupha (lit., "whirling vortices")	4. Bhanwar Gupha	4. Maha Sunn
5. Sach Khand (lit., "Truth Region;" soul/God union)	5. Sach Khand	5. Bhanwar Gupha
.....	6. Alakh Lok	6. Sach Khand
.....	7. Agam Lok	7. Alakh Lok
.....	8. Anami Lok	8. Agam Lok
.....	9. Anami Lok (sometimes it is mentioned in Soami Bagh literature that there are two "anamis"-- one right above Sach Khand and the final, great anami at the very end)

Paul Twitchell's first books on Eckankar were entirely based upon the two versions common in the Beas Satsang. Below is an exact comparison of Radhasoami's and Eckankar's inner plane cosmologies and the sounds which are heard at each plane; note that there are essentially no differences, except in the spelling of technical terms:

Cosmological Correlations

Radhasoami Version (as given in With a Great Master in India by Julian P. Johnson)	Eckankar Version (as given in Dialogues with the Master by Paul Twitchell)
1. Sahansdal Kanwal: bell sound	1. Sahasra dal Kanwal: bell sound
2. Trikuti (Brahmananda): drums/thunder	2. Brahmanda (Trikuti): drums/thunder
3. Daswan Dwar: sarangi (stringed instrument)	3. Deswan Dwar: violins
4. Bhanwar Gupha (Sohang): flute	4. Sohang (Bhanwar Gupha): flute
5. Sach Khand: vina	5. Sach Khand: vina

However, Twitchell did not keep the Beas cosmology intact for long. In the late 1960s he began making changes which dramatically altered the sounds, lights, deities, and function of the various planes, even though it contradicted his previous charts as given in The Dialogues with the Master, The Tiger's Fang and The Far Country. Most initiates of Eckankar are unaware of the alterations. The following is the revised version given in the 1971 text, The Spiritual Notebook, and which is today the standard cosmology for all Eckists in the world:

Standard Eckankar Chart for God-Worlds

(as given in The Spiritual Notebook)

- 1. Physical: Elam (thunder sound)
- 2. Astral: Sat Kanwal-Anda (roar of surf)
- 3. Causal: Maha-Kal-Par-Brahm (tinkle of bells)
- 4. Mental: Brahmanda Brahm (running water)
- * Etheric: Saguna-Saguna Brahm (buzzing of bees)
- 5. Soul: Sat Nam (single note of flute)
- 6. Alakh Lok: Alakh Lok (heavy wind)
- 7. Alaya Lok: Alaya Lok (deep humming)
- 8. Hukikat Lok: Hukikat Lok (thousand violins)
- 9. Agam Lok: Agam Lok (music of the woodwinds)
- 10. Anami Lok: Anami Lok (sound of a whirlpool)
- 11. Sugmad World: Sugmad Lok (music of universe)
- 12. Sugmad: Sugmad-Living Reality (music of god)

The differences between Twitchell's earlier version and his later, standard one are significant.(3) As Lane points out in his book, *The Making of a Spiritual Movement*, Twitchell's changes include altering which sound one hears in the Astral plane (first version: tinkle of bells; second, revised version: roar of surf) and the Soul plane (first version: vina or great sound current; second, revised version: single note of flute), as well as replacing the various Lords or Deities (first version: Maha Kal was above Saguna Brahm; second, revised version: the two are switched). Although these differences may appear to be trivial to an outsider, to members of shabd yoga related movements they are quite pivotal since the technical yoga is based upon knowing which sounds to adhere to and which to discard.

By a close analysis of Twitchell's writings, it is clear that Eckankar's ideas underwent an evolution from 1965 to 1971. What is not clear is why. Why, for instance, did Twitchell feel the need to modify what had more or less been standard fare in Radhasoami circles for nearly a century? There may be several answers, ranging from the critic's charge that Twitchell needed to develop his own unique "brand" of Sant Mat so that he could distinguish Eckankar from its Indian counterparts and thereby "copyright" his schema as unique (which he did, by the way, in his work, *The Spiritual Notebook*) to the more sympathetic insider who believes that Twitchell was given revelations that previous shabd yoga masters were not. In any case, Twitchell's cosmology is a decidedly different one than his earlier ones and represents a drastic overhauling of the Radhasoami version.

That this evolution occurred within the span of less than four years is remarkable; that such an evolution is documented in books is even more remarkable. It suggests at the very least that a new religion (and maybe new religions in general) are much more pliable in their early development than anyone inside or outside the movement may at first suspect.

Initiation

Initiation into Radhasoami is regarded as the most sacred event that can occur in the life of a disciple. Theologically it represents the transference of the soul's tie with Kal (the negative force) over to the Satguru (the positive force). Although there are many different branches of Radhasoami, there are certain common traits to be found in each of their initiation procedures. First, a sacred name ("Radhasoami" in the case of Agra related groups) or names (five names in the case of Beas related groups) is given to the disciple as his/her meditation mantra to be repeated as often as possible at the third eye. The disciple is also instructed how to listen to the inner sound (technically known as bhajan) by assuming a certain yogic position, the details of which are considered semi-secret.

In some Radhasoami groups, like Kirpal Singh's related movements (Sant Bani, Kirpal Light, and Sawan-Kirpal Mission), during initiation there is a meditation sitting in which the neophyte is given the opportunity to hear inner sound and see inner light. Overall, the key feature to Radhasoami initiation is learning the procedure of how to meditate, which includes simran (repeating names), dhyan (contemplating at the third eye center, looking either for light or for the form of one's initiating master), and bhajan (listening to inner sound). These three features are prevalent, with slight modifications, in all bona fide Radhasoami satsangs.

When Paul Twitchell developed Eckankar he also conducted initiations. Although he borrowed much from his association with Kirpal Singh and Ruhani Satsang (like similar instructions how to meditate), he made distinctive changes which transformed the character of the initiation process altogether. Perhaps the most obvious change is that he did away with a singular initiation which is common today in Radhasoami circles (at the maximum there are two initiations given in Radhasoami: instruction in the name and instruction in the sound). Twitchell instead invoked multiple initiations, arguing that for each plane of existence a new initiation was necessary. Since Twitchell did away with his original five plane cosmology and replaced it with twelve planes, his multiple initiation also followed suit. Today the official number of potential initiations are twelve, with most members of Eckankar ranging from 2nd level to 5th level. In Eckankar's official dictionary, it explains the purpose of these initiations:

Inner initiation serves the function of raising the vibrations of the individual to those of the nearest higher plane. The inner initiation may come years after the outer initiation. The First Initiation is an inner initiation given in the dream state by the dream master. Sometimes the chela is fully conscious and can remember everything about it; it prepares the chela for the linkup with the Eck Sound Current, the Audible Life Stream. All initiations above the Eighth are inner initiations.⁴

Twitchell stresses that the first initiation takes place in the dream state where the dream master appears to the chela. Such dream initiations are practically unknown of in Radhasoami circles, though there have been exceptions. Perhaps one of the reasons Twitchell invokes such a *modus operandi* is because dreams played a tremendous role in his own inner development. Indeed, in most of his accounts about leaving the body, it is clearly implied that such excursions occurred when he was dreaming.

Moreover, the second initiation, or first outer initiation, in Eckankar does not have the same strict prerequisites that are required in Radhasoami. For instance, in Radhasoami there are four vows which all the groups, more or less, enjoin: 1) strict vegetarianism (no meat whatsoever, including eggs); 2) abstinence from alcohol and any mind-altering drugs; 3) a pure moral life (no sex outside of marriage); and 4) two hours plus of meditation daily. In Eckankar there are essentially no prerequisites in terms of lifestyle (outside of giving up smoking and drugs), except that one has to be a paid member of Eckankar for at least two years.

Finally, Eckankar's initiation ceremony itself is quite different than Radhasoami's. In many ways it is more reminiscent of Transcendental Meditation's ceremony, where one offers a fruit or gift to the initiator and one is given a name suited to that person's personality. Eckankar does not give out the five name mantra of the Beas related satsangs, nor does it give only one name for all initiations. Rather, there are a series of names which the particular initiator (working on behalf of the Master) can give. In sum, Eckankar's initiation is a hybrid of various methods, but one which is most closely aligned with T.M. and Ruhani Satsang.

The Sacred Writings: The Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad

Eckankar's most sacred writings, **The Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad**, Book One and Book Two, authored by Twitchell and published in the early seventies, have striking similarities with Julian P. Johnson's 1939 book, *The Path of the Masters*.⁵ Although Twitchell's adoption of lengthy passages from Radhasoami literature empirically illustrates the extent to which he was influenced by Radhasoami, of greater interest perhaps are the numerous alterations of concepts and terms which Twitchell invokes, giving insight into how religious ideas evolve.

When Twitchell first started writing about Eckankar he more or less used terminology which was based upon shabd yoga. However, he quickly began to take on terms which were not in Radhasoami literature and incorporate them into the larger theology of Eckankar, as witnessed in *The Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad*. In so doing he made Eckankar an eclectic teaching, even though its major emphasis was Indian in origin. The term Mahanta is a case in point. Although the term usually translates as "one who is in charge of a temple" or "head of an ashram," Twitchell utilized it as meaning: "The Living Eck Master." He writes:

The full force of the Rod of Eck Power and the Mantle of the Mahanta are embodied directly in him; all those who come to him in the present age have been with him since their advent into the world; the body of the Mahanta is the Eck, which is the essence of God flowing out from the Ocean of Love and Mercy. This special incarnation of the Sugmad makes an appearance but once every five to a thousand or more years, depending upon the part he is to play in a major upliftment of consciousness on every plane.

In other words, Mahanta now stands for Radhasoami's Satguru. They are more or less interchangeable in their essential functions, except for the part about manifesting every "five to a thousand or more years" which is Twitchell's addendum to the concept.

Thus, Twitchell not only uses Radhasoami terms, but he also uses Radhasoami concepts without the terms, preferring to coin his own Indian or Sufi names for his own purposes. There are several examples in The Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad of how he substitutes Indian words for Persian ones, such as referring to God as Sugmad instead of Sat Purush, using the term zikar instead of simran, and employing the sacred Sufi word "hu" as a chant (much like the use of "om" in Indian philosophy). Even the title of his book, The Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad, is Persian for The Path of the Masters, although it translates more like The Law/Path to God. Indeed, most of Twitchell's understanding of Sufi terminology comes directly from Hazrat Inayat Khan, who Johnson cites in section 11.5 in The Path of the Masters. But Twitchell does something distinct from Johnson: instead of merely citing Sufi terms Twitchell incorporates them into his religion while altering their meaning for his own unique theology. Perhaps this is an effort to distinguish his group a bit more from its Indian ancestor.

Moreover, while Twitchell may adopt lengthy passages from The Path of the Masters, he tailors them to fit Eckankar, leaving out any material that conflicts with its teachings. A key example of this occurs when Twitchell utilizes a passage of Johnson's that deals with morality but he omits an important section concerning the wrongfulness of killing and eating animals. Why? Because unlike Radhasoami, Eckankar does not require a vegetarian diet. Below are five examples illustrating how Twitchell not only adopts certain Radhasoami ideas, but how he transforms some and rejects others, although keep in mind that this is just a small sampling of the numerous "empirical correlations" found within these texts:7

Example One

The subject matter here concerns the living guru. These two sections are a near match. Yet, Twitchell makes a few substitutions to fit his Eck terminology, like referring to God as the Sugmad instead the Indian term Sat Purush, and using the term Mahanta instead of Satguru or Master. (On occasion in other sections of his writing Twitchell may use the term ECK Master.)

Radhasoami Literature:	Eckankar Literature:
The Path of the Masters (Fifteenth Edition) p. 180	The Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad Book I p. 80
There is but one to whom the Master bows in humble submission--the supreme Lord, Sat Purush. His sovereign will is the only law the Master recognizes, that and the universal law of all laws--love. Yet the Master breaks no law of man, but supports all good governments. His life and teachings are universal. He belongs to no race or time, but to all nations and all times. He is a citizen of the world-more correctly speaking, having come down here to bring light...	There is only one to whom the Mahanta bows in humble submission. This is the Supreme Lord, the Sugmad. ITS sovereign will is the only law the Mahanta recognizes, and the universal law of all laws--love. While living on earth in the human form though he will break no law of man, but supports all good governments. His life and works are universal. He does not belong to any race or time, but to all nations and all times. Correctly, he is a citizen of the macrocosmic worlds, a being which has entered this world to bring the Light to all peoples.

Example Two

These are very important passages, for we see how Eckankar develops its own theological ideas apart from its predecessor. Witness the last line of Twitchell's writing where he refers to the necessity of transferring one's allegiance from one Master to the next. This idea is not part of Johnson's group (Radhasoami Beas). Moreover, when discussing God in the beginning of the passage Twitchell opts for the term Sugmad. Finally, there is a variance in writing when Twitchell states that the "stumbling block" for

man is that he cannot see all God's manifestations," whereas Johnson is suggesting that the "stumbling block" occurs for religions who do not realize that a Master is needed for spiritual growth.

Radhasoami Literature:	Eckankar Literature:
The Path of the Masters p. 194	The Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad Book I p. 82
It still remains a fact that not even God himself can instruct us or give us the needed help on the upward path without a Master in human form to act as his agent or spokesman...This is the greatest stumbling block of all religions...If you insist that your dead Master is not dead, then I will cheerfully agree with you. He is not dead, but he had left this theater of action. He is no longer in touch with humanity. His present work is elsewhere. of the chela must change to the successor. [my italics]	The SUGMAD cannot instruct, or give man the needed help on the upward path, without the Mahanta in human form to act as his instrument and spokesman. The greatest stumbling block for man is that he cannot see all God's manifestations. Those who cling to a Master who has been translated from this earth world are in error. He is not dead, but he has left the field of action in this region of matter. He is no longer in touch with humanity; his work is elsewhere. The discipleship. . .

Example Three

While these passages are both concerned with how one should properly meditate, there are a few obvious differences. Notice that Twitchell makes some substitutions of terms to resonate with Eckankar thinking. For instance, he refers to "ECK Dhun" instead of "Shabd-dhun;" he speaks of "music of the ECK" and not the "audible life stream;" and he calls the disciple "chela," and the Master "Mahanta." Moreover, he keeps certain Indian terms, like dhyan and bhajan, but replaces simran with the Persian word "zikar." He eliminates reference to Patanjali in this passage as well, perhaps to separate his ideas a bit more from India.

Also of importance is his mention of chanting "the sacred name of God," as though indicating there is only one name and it is voiced externally. In the Radhasoami Beas group, however, there are several sacred names one internally chants while meditating. Hence, even though the resemblances may be overwhelming, the alterations made give us insight into how Twitchell is trying to make the teachings his own.

Radhasoami Literature:	Eckankar Literature:
The Path of the Masters p. 441	The Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad, Book I p. 117
There is no pranayama in this yoga, as it has no place in the system of the Masters. Fixing the mind at the prescribed center, bringing it to one point, is the dharana of the yogis of Patanjali. Of course, this has to be done if one is to go inside. Beholding the Master with a loving gaze, either in the physical form or the radiant form, is the dhyan of this path. This has to be done in any case. But in this yoga, simran	There is no Pranayama in the practice of seeing the Mahanta during this spiritual exercise of ECK. The chela must sit in the proper position, with the mind detached from the world and fixed at the spot between the eyebrows, bringing all of his attention to focus upon the singular eye. This has to be done if one is to go inside and behold the Mahanta. He softly chants

comes first, before dhyān. Then after simran and dhyān comes bhajan, a form of exercise not known to any other system. It consists of listening to the Sound, the audible life stream. The reason that no other system has this is because they know nothing of the audible life stream, the Shabd-dhūn. Thus they miss the most vital thing in the whole process.

the sacred name of God beholding the Mahanta with a loving gaze in the radiant form. The Zikar come first and then come the Dhyana, the vision of the radiant form of the Mahanta. Following this comes Bhajan, the spiritual exercise of listening to the music of ECK. No path to God has this form of exercise, mainly because none know the ECK Dhūn. They miss the most vital part of the realization of the SUGMAD in their lives.

Example Four

In these passages the inner spiritual journey of the disciple is sketched out. There are some notable differences between the two, however. First of all, in referring to shabd Twitchell prefers ECK, unlike Johnson who calls it the "audible life stream." Secondly, when looking at the eyes of the Master for a spiritual boost Twitchell suggests that one can gaze upon the eyes seen in the inner vision or, if necessary, one can use a picture. Johnson, on the other hand, does not mention the use of a picture but seems to insinuate that one should look at the eyes of the physical Master, and thus those near him in location have a greater advantage over those who are not. Moreover, whereas Johnson mentions simran, which for the Radhasoami Beas group is a universal mantra given at the time of initiation, Twitchell speaks of an "individual mantram," sometimes referred to as "Zikar." And unlike Johnson, Twitchell recommends that when looking at the eyes of the ECK Master one should "softly chant the Master's name."

Radhasoami Literature:	Eckankar Literature:
The Path of the Masters p. 439-40	The Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad Book I p. 116-17
A new stage marks his career. So far his success has been only partial, but very great. He has accomplished much, but he has only fairly begun his upward journey. Up to that time, he has been doing simran, repeating the keynotes. And that has given him fair concentration. But from now on, he will discontinue simran. He will not need it. He now has the presence of the Master whom he may behold constantly. This is called dhyān. This sight inspires much love and adoration. It is the most perfect dhyān and it is more effective than simran for concentration. In fact, at all times, even before the disciple goes inside, his best possible exercise is to look steadily at the Master's form, and particularly his eyes. If one will take advantage of every moment to look steadily, with no shifting of vision, right at the Master's eyes, he will find himself concentrating and going inside quicker than any other way. This is one very great advantage a disciple has in being personally near the Master. So we now have simran and perfect dhyān. These are two of the essentials in the	This new stage in the life of the chela brings about a remarkable change in him. Up to this time his success has been partial. He has had the opportunity to test the exercises of ECK and repeat his "individual mantram". [my italics] From this moment on he may discontinue his chanting of the mantram for he will not need it. He is now in the presence of the Mahanta, the living Master, whom he may view constantly. This is the Dhyana, which inspires love for the ECK Master and the Master's love for him. It is well in the beginning for the chela to understand that his greatest exercise is to look steadily at the living ECK Master's form be it in his inner vision, particularly the eyes, or simply a picture of the Master. If one does this during his contemplation period,

exercises. At this point something else of great importance happens. You will contact the audible life stream perfectly and consciously, and its music will begin to work changes in you. You get a little of it before this point, but here you get it more perfectly. Here it begins to fairly enchant you and to pull you up with increasing attraction and power. You will find yourself listening to it with rapt attention and deep delight, completely absorbed in it. You will never wish to leave it or to miss a single note of this marvelous strains...It is said that the student who reaches this point may consider that one-half of his work is finished for the whole of his journey. While formerly you had to exert your will to hold your attention upon the focus, now you will find it equally difficult to withdraw your attention from it. You will most ardently wish to go on forever looking at the one and listening to the other.

looking steadily into the eyes, he will find himself going into the other words more quickly than any other method. By softly chanting the Master's name and gazing steadily into his eyes he has the twofold essentials of the spiritual exercises, the Zikar and Dhyana. It is at this point that a great occurrence takes place. He will contact the ECK and ITS prefect sounds will bring about changes within himself. He will find himself with increasing attraction and love. He will never want to leave it, or to miss one note of its delightful strain. The chela who has reached this point will find that half of the preparation for his journey is done. While before he had to exert his will power to focus the attention of the sounds of ECK, now it is difficult to withdraw attention for it. The living ECK Master and the ECK are attracting him, lifting him higher with each effort that he makes...He will have the most ardent wish to go on forever looking at the eyes of the Mahanta and listening to the sounds of the ECK.

Example Five

Here Johnson and Twitchell discuss the moral and social degradation of the human race which they claim began after the golden age. There is a section of Johnson's, though, that Twitchell omits--the one dealing with the immorality of killing and eating animals. Unlike Sant Mat, Eckankar does not require a vegetarian diet. Twitchell 's omission of this section illustrates how Twitchell is adopting only certain Radhasoami ideas and not others.

Radhasoami Literature:	Eckankar Literature:
The Path of the Masters pp. 333-36	The Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad, Book II pp. 68-9
Connected with this great fact of nature is a problem of vital interest to society in general. It is this: Reincarnation and karma offer society a sound basis upon which to proceed in dealing with all sort of human irregularities...A knowledge of reincarnation will make great difference in our treatment of both men and animals. It will teach us that we are all bound up in one karmic bond. We	Reincarnation and social reconstruction go together in this physical world; in other words, there is a vast interest in society in the field of reincarnation and karma. Both offer society a sound basis upon which to proceed in dealing with all sorts of human irregularities...The knowledge of reincarnation makes a great deal of difference in the treatment of both men and animals. It teaches man that he is bound up in one karmic bond. It shows that civilizations and governments have changed from age to age, in each age taking shape to correspond with the spiritual development of its citizen.

cannot then mistreat animals, neither can we go on "killing and eating them". [my italics]

Civilization and governments have changed from age to age, in each age taking shape to correspond with the inner development of its citizens. Not only do the saints teach that there was a Golden Age from which the human race has descended, but they point out the more important fact that such descent has been marked by a gradual degeneration of mankind from their pristine glory...It is a fact which must sooner or later be acknowledged that kings, rulers, courts, judges, priests, policemen, lawyers and legal punishments are all marks of racial degeneration and not indices of a high degree of civilization, as many fondly believe. We would much like to discuss this subject more fully...As evil tendencies become more and more manifest in society, some regulations had to be adopted to protect society...It is an old trick of priests and kings to teach the mob that whatever they give out is the will of God...The real code could be only

a righteous law. The real code had in view just as much the divine rights of the people as it had the divine rights of kings. Over this bar of divine rights even the king could not trespass. We cannot fail to make note of the fact that as the human race entered upon its decline in civilized standards, there was a transfer of the center of government from within man to enacted statutes--in other words, for moral standards deeply embedded in the inner consciousness of the people to laws written in books. When the time came that the fundamental law of life was no longer in the hearts of the people but in books, then the decline of civilization had already set in.

It is a fact, since man as descended from a golden age, that sooner or later it must be acknowledged that kings, rulers, courts, priests, lawyers and legal punishment are all marks of racial degeneration and not indices of a high degree of civilization, as so many believe. It would do well to ponder this point. As evil tendencies are necessary to adopt to protect the members of society. It is an old trick of priests and kings to teach the masses that whatever they give out is the will of God. The righteous law is called Danda. It treats of the divine rights of the people as well as that of the kings. When it works both ways, it means that neither can trespass upon the other's rights. To have to write law upon the books and use this as a guide to keep society right with the moral standards of life is to bring about disorder in society. As the human race enters upon its decline in civilized standards there is, and was, a transfer of the center of government from within man to enacted statutes; in other words, from moral standards deeply embedded in the inner consciousness of people, to laws written in books. When the time came that the fundamental Danda, the law of righteousness, was no longer in the hearts of people, but in books, then the decline of civilization set in for society's decline.

From THE MAKING OF A SPIRITUAL MOVEMENT: THE UNTOLD STORY OF PAUL TWITCHELL AND ECKANKAR

Available from Del Mar Press, P.O. Box 2508, Del Mar, California 92014. \$15 Author: David C. Lane

PREFACE

THE EVOLUTION OF A TERM PAPER

[1983 Edition]

This book is the product of over five years of extensive research. It began quite simply as a term paper for a Religious Studies class at California State University, Northridge. However, after sending my first paper to Eckankar's headquarters and receiving a letter from their attorneys threatening me with a lawsuit if I published my work, the project quickly evolved into a full-time investigation. The controversy over the paper primarily stemmed from my findings on the early life of Paul Twitchell, the movement's founder. They were completely contrary to what Eckankar had written.

After about a year more of study, I wrote a second paper, **The Making of a Spiritual Movement: The Untold Story of Paul Twitchell and Eckankar**. Little did I realize then that the work would cause such an intense dispute within Eckankar. Through a process which I do not completely understand, and which is probably best described as "through the grapevine", the manuscript found its way throughout different parts of America and even went so far as Europe. [1] The large response that the paper elicited is best indicated by the fact that Darwin Gross, the then Living Eck Master, had to devote part of his October 1978 article in the Mystic World concerning it:

"Those who have withstood the attacks have not been affected by the material written by people who have not done their research or homework, and gotten the facts straight. These attackers are on a very low scale of spiritual [sic] according to the survival scale."

"There have been some manuscripts being passed around that are trying to degrade ECKANKAR, its teaching as well as its present spiritual leader and past spiritual leader."

In Arizona, where the work had its most significant impact, Darwin Gross wrote a personal letter to all Eckists in order to try to squelch the controversy. Asserts Gross:

----- [1] It was only after I returned from a research project with Professor Mark Juergensmeyer to North India in the summer of 1978 when I learned that several Eckists had photocopied my manuscript and distributed it throughout North America.]

" My biography is coming out sometime this year and will put a lot of things straight. Don't get involved with people who gossip or have things to say about Eckankar that are defamatory. This is true also about the David Lane manuscript that has been circulated amongst many of the chelas. His untruths will eventually catch up to him."

My paper had been given to a business consultant to review the manuscript, trying to find any possible loopholes in the research. But because the work was thoroughly documented, Eckankar could not take any legal action. This did not stop them, however, from pursuing legal action against individuals whom I quoted in the text.

In 1979, Eckankar tried to take a two-and-a-half million dollar lawsuit against Professor Ed Gruss of the Los Angeles Baptist College for allegedly "publishing" a highly defamatory term paper by James M. Peebles, a fellow classmate of mine at California State University, Northridge. Prompted by a letter to their office, Eckankar sent one of their own officials, Mike Noe, down to southern California to secure a copy of the twelve page report, which claimed, among other things, that Eckankar was skirting tax laws and that Darwin Gross had fathered an illegitimate child. Mike Noe, as it turns out though, asked for the paper from Ed Gruss under the false disguise that he was a member of the Spiritual Counterfeits Project (a conservative Christian research ministry centered in Berkeley). Gruss, who had not read the work, kindly gave Noe a photocopy. Noe went back to Menlo Park and Eckankar then proceeded to take a lawsuit against Gruss for "publishing" the report. Though the lawsuit never did come to trial, Eckankar used it as the basis for several half-page advertisements in which they claimed that their group and its teachings were being attacked by conservative Christians. These advertisements were run in some of the major newspapers across the country, including the Los Angeles Times.

Due to Eckankar's increasing efforts to undermine any open and objective investigation into its founder's past, Brian Walsh and I printed a limited edition of my manuscript in the summer of 1979. Within three weeks of its publication, the work sold out. It even earned the distinction of being stolen from Shambhala bookstore in Berkeley; the five copies were presumably purloined by some disgruntled Eckist.

Around this same time, the Spiritual Counterfeits Project published their own journal on Eckankar which was largely based on my manuscript. Their work was widely distributed, reaching almost every Eckankar center in the world. This caused quite an uproar and many initiates left the movement. Eckankar's headquarters again attempted to repress the furor over the controversy by sending a bulletin -- this time, worldwide. Declares the memo:

"Sri Darwin was not allowed to edit the SCP-Journal publication as had been promised by the Spiritual Counterfeit group, and it does not tell the straight story. The SCP material, taken from a college thesis submitted by David Lane, was not completely researched and is untrue. These people are being used by the Kal forces to dismantle ECKANKAR and are referred to by Sri Paul Twitchell in a private tape he made in July 1971, shortly before he translated...."

" Sri Darwin asks that these SCP-Journals be destroyed. Many ECKists who have been on the fence have dropped ECKANKAR due to this SCP material, and the Living ECK Master will not be responsible for the karma being built by these SCP people."

Since the private publication of *The Making of the Spiritual Movement*, I have received letters from interested Eckists and seekers in countries around the world, including West Germany, Sweden, England, South Africa, Nigeria, New Zealand, Canada, Australia, and India, about my investigation on the history of Eckankar and its founder, the late Paul Twitchell. From these letters, I have learned that some Eck chelas were being harassed by officials higher up in the group and that several lawsuits were being taken against Eckankar and its questionable activities. Three Eckists even claimed that they had received death threats because of their

turning away from the movement. [2] In light of this disturbing news and in response to the growing number of requests for my manuscript, I decided to revise and update the work, making it more uniform both in appearance and content. This book is a result of that endeavor.

----- [2] I, too, have been on the receiving end of several threatening letters from Eckists who were displeased with my research work. One Eck chela said that, "The army of Eckankar soldiers will come after you!" Another disciple, perhaps a bit more serious, drew skeletons on his letter and told me that I was not worthy to tie Paul Twitchell's shoe laces. From what I have seen over the past four years, I am not in the least surprised by Eckists claiming that they have received death threats. It may not be a reflection on the movement, as such, but on the fanaticism of a few who get carried away.]

Although I cannot possibly thank all the people who have helped me in this research, I would like to express my gratitude to the following individuals: James M. Pebbles, Mark Albrecht, Brooks Alexander, Ed Pecen, Steve Morrow, Paul Gayeski, Neil Tessler, Robert Leverant, Daniel Caldwell, Michelle Greye, Kimball A. Lane, Joseph A. Lane, Michael S. Lane; Professor John E. Sutphin of Mississippi State University; Professor Mark Juergensmeyer of the University of California, Berkeley, for his scholarly advice and pertinent foreword; Louise Lane, for her enthusiasm, support, and concern; Brian Walsh, without whose help I could not have possibly finished this book. And finally, and most importantly, to my dear wife, Jacquelyn Ann, who has shown incredible patience throughout this entire project.

[Chapter 1 - The Early Years of Paul Twitchell](#)
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Chapter One

THE EARLY YEARS OF PAUL TWITCHELL

Determining a Birth Date

There are five contrasting accounts of the birth date of John Paul, the second and last son of Jacob and Dorothy (Effie) Troutman Twitchell.

October 22, 1922

[This birth date appears on Twitchell's death certificate, dated September 27, 1971. The informant to the Ohio Department of Health (Division of Vital Statistics) was Gail Atkinson. See appendix for a photocopy.]

The later, more unreliable sources, which include Gail Atkinson (second wife of John Paul Twitchell), Jack Jarvis (the late reporter for the Seattle Post Intelligencer), and Brad Steiger, place Twitchell's birth date in the early 1920's. Jack Jarvis in an article entitled "Paul Twitchell, Man of Parts," wrote that Twitchell, "a mild-mannered guy", had just turned forty years old. Jarvis wrote the article for the Seattle Post Intelligencer in July, 1963.

Brad Steiger, although he does not give an actual birth date, bases Twitchell's biography, **In My Soul I Am Free**, on the premise that Twitchell was still within his teens at the outbreak of World War Two. [Brad Steiger, *In My Soul I Am Free* (San Diego: Illuminated Way Press, 1974), page 54.] The 1920 or 1922 date (as put forth by Gail Atkinson) cannot be accepted, however, in light of Twitchell's college record. Stephen D. House, Registrar at Western Kentucky University, writes that John Paul Twitchell entered college in September 1933 at the recorded age of twenty-two. [Personal letter from Stephen D. House dated November 29, 1977, to the author.] If this record is to be rejected and Gail Atkinson's accepted, it makes John Paul Twitchell ten years old on entering college. Steiger, coincidentally, makes no reference whatsoever to Twitchell's college career in his biography.

October 22, 1912

[This birth date is found on Paul and Camille Ballowe Twitchell's marriage certificate, dated September, 1942. It also appears on Twitchell's delayed birth certificate which was compiled by his father, Jacob, on September 17, 1941.]

It would appear as though October is the correct month for John Paul's birth date as all reliable documents mention it. The year 1912 which appears on John Paul's first marriage certificate and on his delayed birth certificate, [They were married on August 12, 1942 in Providence, Rhode Island.] however, cannot be substantiated because the birth record for John Paul in Paducah, Kentucky (his place of birth), was compiled three decades later. Moreover, Twitchell's birth record is inconsistent with other facts relating to his earlier life, such as his entrance in college. Nevertheless, these two documents do summarily indicate that the "1922" birth date was a fabrication made years later by Paul, presumably to convince his young wife, Gail, that he was not too much older than herself.

[The "delayed" birth record was sent to me by an Eckist in Washington, who wishes to remain unnamed.]

October 23, 19

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[This birth date is recorded in the book, *Genealogy of the Twitchell Family: Record of the Descendants of the Puritan--Benjamin Twitchell (Dorchester, Lancaster, Medfield and Sherborn, Massachusetts: 1632-1927)*, compiled and edited by Ralph Emerson Twitchell of Santa Fe, New Mexico (New York: Privately published for Herbert K. Twitchell, 1929).]

According to the *Genealogy of the Twitchell Family* compiled and edited by Ralph Emerson Twitchell, John Paul (known as Paul in the book) was born on October 23, 1909. This work (which was privately printed for Herbert K. Twitchell), though, was published in New York in 1929. [Ibid.]

1908

[Library of Congress [biographical information on authors].

As there are apparently no birth records for Paul Twitchell in Paducah, Kentucky, prior to 1912, I owe this information to Professor John E. Sutphin, Chairperson of the Philosophy and Religion Department, at Mississippi State University. Furthermore, some Eckankar officials do not accept any of these dates. Instead they propose that Paul Twitchell was really born as Peddar Zaskq before the Great Southern Earthquake of 1812. This is by far the most unusual account--and subsequently, the most difficult to prove--concerning Twitchell's birth date and birthplace. The source for this story comes from Twitchell himself in one of his later books, *The Spiritual Notebook* (San Diego: Illuminated Way Press, 1971) wherein he writes on page 195: "Following him (Sudar Singh) is Peddar Zaskq (the spiritual name for Paul Twitchell) who was born on a packetboat in the midst of the Mississippi River, a few minutes after a great earthquake shook the mid-south and formed a great lake in this region..."

The 1908 birth date of John Paul, as put forth by the Library of Congress and Paul Iverlet (Twitchell's brother-in-law; Kay Dee's husband), cannot be proved.

October 23, 1910

According to George Tipton Wilson, author of ***From Paducah to Eckankar: A Kentuckian's Strange Odyssey*** and a personal friend of Paul Twitchell since the 1930's, Twitchell's family Bible lists Paul's birth date as October 23, 1910.

Wilson's article was published in the *Courier Journal Magazine* in Kentucky on January 10, 1982. The article is replete with valuable information on Paul Twitchell's early life.

It also lists his first name as "Jacob" (apparently after his father) and not "John". [The 1912 delayed birth record also lists Twitchell's first name as "Jacob" not "John."] The reliability of this document, though, is questionable. Even family documents can be filled with errors, since they often rely on memory. Regardless, it should be seriously entertained as an important piece of biographical information, as Camille Ballowe--Paul's first wife--indicated that her first husband was born "around 1910."

The 1922 birth date, as we have noted, is untenable, and the 1912 birth date does not have a birth record made during that year to support it. Hence, it seems likely that both dates are of John Paul's making. However, the 1908, 1909, and 1910 birth dates fit in chronologically with the real life events of John Paul; thus making them stand as the most reliable dates for Twitchell's actual birth date. Nevertheless, it is safer to assume that John Paul's birth took place somewhere between 1908 and 1912 .

The Birthplace of John Paul Twitchell

According to the Genealogy of the Twitchell Family, [Op. cit.] the first son born to Jacob and Effie Twitchell was named Rupert. His birth date was November 24, 1901. Katherine (otherwise known as Kay Dee), who was the first and only daughter of the Twitchell's, was born on July 8, 1904. [Ibid., page 512]. This birth date also appears on Katherine Iverlet's death certificate.

Howard Clyde (known simply as Clyde in Steiger's biography of Twitchell) was born in either 1906 or 1907. Paul Iverlet, Katherine Twitchell's husband, places Howard Clyde's birth date in the year 1906. The Genealogy of the Twitchell Family, however, places it in 1907 (March 24); [op. cit.], page 512.

Rupert, Katherine and Howard Clyde were born on the Westside of Paducah, Kentucky. Although there is agreement on the birthplace of Jacob and Effie's first three children, there is some discrepancy concerning the birthplace of John Paul, the fourth and last child born to the Twitchell's. All accounts, except those connected with Eckankar (such as Brad Steiger's) agree that John Paul was also born on the Westside of Paducah, Kentucky.

Both Paul Iverlet and The Genealogy of the Twitchell Family agree on the birthplace of John Paul Twitchell.

Steiger writes that Twitchell was born out of wedlock to a Mrs. Folger , who was allegedly having an extramarital affair with Jacob N. Twitchell. (It is unclear in Steiger's book what actually took place.) Yet, John Paul does not consider Jacob to be his legitimate father, as evidenced by the fact that he calls him "my foster father."
[Brad Steiger, op. cit., page 34.]

Paul Iverlet, however, strongly disagrees with Steiger's account of the Twitchell family and calls it an "atrocious lie."
[Paul Iverlet in a personal letter to Jim Anderson dated March 31, 1975.]

Further substantiation comes from Mattie Twitchell, widow of Paul's brother, Howard Clyde, who knew Paul's place in the family. According to her account, almost all of what Steiger wrote was a fanciful yarn developed over the years by Paul himself. Indeed Mattie's son warns: "It's a good thing my daddy [Howard Clyde] wasn't living; he would have beat the hell out of him (Paul) for telling lies about his early life."
[Wilson, op. cit.]

Steiger himself admits to having changed the real names and places in Twitchell's biography, which he adds is a common practice in the biographies of famous people.
[Personal telephone conversation between the author and Brad Steiger (1977).]

Much of the legend surrounding Twitchell's unusual birth story has its roots in Paul's later writings concerning the Eck Masters. Twitchell has stated that Eck Masters are always born near a large body of water and in strange circumstances. Virgin births and other uncommon phenomena are simply accepted as facets of the process of how Eckankar masters make their advent into the physical world.

Most of the stories concerning Twitchell's unusual birth can be traced directly to Twitchell's own writing, in either book or discourse form.

The Teen Years

Brad Steiger writes that Paul Twitchell was fifteen-years old when he visited his supposed half-sister, Kay Dee, in Paris, France, where she was studying art. Yet Paul and Kay Dee had to return almost immediately to China Point (cover-name for Paducah, Kentucky) because their mother, Effie, was dying. According to Steiger, it was on their subsequent return to Paris, France, that Kay Dee introduced her brother to an Eastern adept proficient in bilocation (out-of-body experience) named Sudar Singh.

[Brad Steiger, *In My Soul I Am Free*. Ibid., page 51.]

Concerning this period of his life, Twitchell writes:

"Years later while in Paris visiting my half-sister who was studying art, I found her seriously interested in an Eastern Adept, Sudar Singh from Allahabad, India, who taught the ways to the higher consciousness was via soul travel. Fortunately, the two of us were able to follow him to India and lived for a year in his ashram learning much about out-of-body traveling."

[Paul Twitchell, "Can You Be In Two Places At The Same Time," *Search Magazine* (September 1965), page 15.]

Steiger later mentions that Kay Dee and Paul arrived home in China Point shortly before World War Two. Conversely, Paul Iverlet and friends of Kay Dee deny that she ever visited Paris, France, much less Allahabad, India. Interestingly, Iverlet (Kay Dee's husband) states that his wife never left the United States in her entire life. Also, he claims that John Paul never left North America until the Second World War.

[Paul Iverlet in a telephone conversation with the author (October 1977)]

A research librarian at the Paducah Public Library, who worked with Katherine Iverlet for many years, told me in a telephone interview (1977) that to her knowledge Katherine never went to France or India.

In confirmation of Iverlet's statements, Steiger's dates seem chronologically out of order with the real life events of John Paul. For some reason, Twitchell has led Steiger and others (including Gail Atkinson and Jack Jarvis) to believe that he was born in the early 1920's (specifically October 22, 1922),

[Refer to Paul Twitchell's death certificate, op. cit.]

when in actuality he was born much earlier (1908-1912). Thus, when Steiger writes that Twitchell visited France at fifteen, the year is somewhere between 1936 and 1939. And on Paul's subsequent visit to India and return to the United States, he is just approaching his twenties. But, as our earlier research indicates, the registrar at Western Kentucky University has Twitchell as being twenty-two in 1933; thus, making John Paul thirty in 1940.

If we accept the 1908-1912 range of birth dates for John Paul, it places his visit to India between 1923 and 1927. But Steiger writes that after a year's stay in India (making the year 1924-1928), Paul and Kay Dee returned to the United States shortly before the outbreak of World War Two. This would make a gap of eleven to fifteen years before World War Two. If Twitchell visited India, as Steiger claims, the question arises: Does Steiger consider eleven to fifteen years to be "shortly before" the outbreak of World War Two?

In the book, **The Kandjur: The Words and Wisdom of Paul Twitchell** (Las Vegas: Illuminated Way Press, 1968), Twitchell claims that he gave a talk in Dublin, Ireland, in August 1928. An excerpt from that talk reads, "My greatest problem with people is dealing, not with skeptics or non-believers, but those with failure consciousness..." . Presumably, if the 1922 birth date is accepted, Twitchell was remarkably intelligent at six years old. Even if the 1908 birth date

is accepted, there is no proof to support Twitchell's claim that he was in Ireland or India.

Effie Troutman Twitchell died on April 26, 1940, of a liver disorder.

[Death record, Department of Human Resources; Franfort, Kentucky, Registrar of Vital Statistics.]

Hence, when Kay Dee and Paul flew home from Paris, France, to attend to her the year would have been 1940. According to Steiger's account, it would have been late 1941 before Kay Dee and Paul would arrive home from India. It is evident, therefore, that Steiger uses the "1922" birth date of John Paul Twitchell as a working base. Noting that the birth date is a fabrication, Steiger's whole account of Paul and Kay Dee's travels becomes highly questionable.

Brad Steiger, in a personal telephone conversation with the author (1977), mentioned that all the files at the Eckankar office were open to him. Steiger also claimed that he had an assortment of pictures of Paul Twitchell. Some of these pictures were supposedly taken at various spots around the world, thus supporting Twitchell's self-claimed travels. However, one note should be added here: Steiger makes no references to Twitchell's first marriage with Camille Ballowe, his association with Kirpal Singh, nor his membership in Scientology. Evidently, these files were not open to him.

Finally, there is no evidence--documentary or otherwise--to support Steiger's claim (given to him by John Paul) that Twitchell visited Paris, France, or India before World War Two. As for the master Sudar Singh, there are numerous discrepancies concerning his age, his actual whereabouts and, for that matter, his very existence. We will deal with him at length, however, in the third part of this book.

The War Years

Very little is known of Paul Twitchell's life from 1935 to 1940, except for the fact that he published two small books of poems, entitled *Green Memories* and *Coins of Gold* in 1939 in Paducah, Kentucky.

Coins of Gold was republished by Illuminated Way Press (owned by Eckankar). According to George Tipton Wilson's article, *From Paducah to Eckankar*, Twitchell was a prolific writer in the 1930's and 1940's. Writes Wilson: "Not since Irvin Shrewsbury Cobb graduated from knee-pants had Paducah produced a writer whose words turned up more regularly in print." Ripley's "Believe It or Not"--probably in response to Twitchell's own publicity drum-beating--heralded the amazing fact that he sold an article every day. The Courier-Journal Magazine, where Twitchell's byline appeared with some regularity, increased his purported output, reporting that he had sold "some 1,800 stories and articles in three years. . . ." The Hardin County Independent in Elizabethtown, Ill., reported on Aug. 10, 1939, that a New York publishing house had accepted Twitchell's novel "Broken Petals," though no one today knows the fate of the book. Almost as a footnote, the newspaper added that his recent volume of poetry, *"Coins of Gold"*, has pushed him into the limelights." This 36-page offering of lackluster poems was printed by Press Publishing Co. Inc. in Paducah, probably in exchange for some of Twitchell's commercial word wizardry.

John Paul (we shall henceforth refer to him as Paul as he was commonly called) enlisted in the Navy in early 1942. Shortly after entering the Navy as a "Chief Specialist", Paul married Camille Ballowe, a native of Paducah, Kentucky, in Providence, Rhode Island, in August 1942. [Copy of the Record of Marriage, Division of Vital Statistics, Rhode Island State Department of Health.]

According to Ms. Ballowe, Paul received his commission as a Ensign in 1942 and then later

became a full lieutenant. He was up for Lieutenant Commander when he requested to be released from the Navy shortly after V.J. day.

Ms. Ballowe writes that Paul and she went to New York City after the war. There, Twitchell embarked on a literary career. He later became associated with Our Navy magazine as a correspondent; a job which, in December of 1945, took him to Washington, D.C. Concerning this period, Ms. Ballowe writes:

Later he worked for the Navy (going back to uniform and writing manuals for them). He also worked for the National Home Builders Association, National Chamber of Commerce. And did some promotional work for several companies and a hospital...

[Camille Ballowe in a personal letter to the author dated October 30, 1977.]

During the post-war years, Ballowe and Twitchell attended many churches and religious ceremonies. Recollects Ballowe:

"He was always interested in spiritual matters. Spent much of the time in meditation, read everything he could find on spiritual subjects. In New York we attended many churches and religious services. Only as visitors...I have always thought of Paul as a seeker of religion."

[Ibid.]

After several different jobs, Twitchell and his wife joined the Self Revelation Church of Absolute Monism in Washington, D.C. It was upon entering the Self Revelation Church compounds that a new phase began in Twitchell's life. This phase separates Paul's early life (student and war years) from his years as a neophyte of mystical religions.

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Chapter Two

THE SEARCH (1950-1963)

Paul Twitchell's Association with Swami Premananda, Kirpal Singh, and L. Ron Hubbard

"I remember very well when Swami Premananda of India, who has a Yoga Church in Washington, D.C., said, "When someone asked Bertrand Russell what his philosophy of life was, he wrote several volumes of books on the subject." --Paul Twitchell

[Paul Twitchell, "The Flute of God", Orion Magazine (April-March 1966), page 32.]

Orion Magazine printed Twitchell's book, **The Flute of God**, in bimonthly installments. Note that Twitchell later changed the name Swami Premananda to Sudar Singh when he republished the book at Illuminated Way Press. Refer to Part Three of this book.

Paul Twitchell and his first wife joined the Self-Revelation church of Absolute Monism around 1950. Swami Premananda, the founder of the Church, was closely associated with Paramahansa Yogananda of the Self-Realization Fellowship (known as Yogoda Satsanga Society in India). It was from Swami Premananda that Twitchell learned Kriya yoga, a psycho-physical discipline for mastering the pranic life-current. Concerning his study under the Yoga Satsang, Twitchell recounts:

"One of my experiences while serving under the Yoga Satsang line of masters, was that I found one of the masters on the guise of a beggar. I had been in difficulty for sometime, and very unhappy over the fact that nothing could be found to solve my problem. . . .

"The night after my problem had dissolved the Indian Master Yukestar [sic], of Yoga Satsang, appeared to me in a dream. He said, "You are under my protection. I come to you to give you help. Whenever anything happens that you are discouraged and beaten by the world, I will come to you, in many guises, to help. Never worry again about life's problems on earth."

[Ibid., page 38. Also refer to the third part of this book.]

In 1950, Paul Twitchell and Camille moved to the Church compounds. During much of this time he edited the Church publication, The Mystic Cross. In 1955, Twitchell was requested to leave the Church by Swami Premananda for personal misconduct. In that same year, Paul and Camille were separated. They were finally divorced in early 1960.

[Camille Ballowe in a personal letter to the author, dated October 30, 1977.]

Kirpal Singh and Ruhani Satsang

"I have studied under many teacher [sic], and may yet have to study under more. Like Meher Baba, the Indian Saint, who was said to have had nineteen teacher [sic] to help him gain his place in the universe, I have so far had seven, some outstanding ones, including, Sri Kirpal Singh, of Delhi, India. Each has had their place in my growth toward the spiritual goal; each are equally great in their respective work for mankind. However, I have felt a closer kinship and friendliness to Kirpal Singh, who has shown me a lot of the other work during my first year or so under him. . . "

--Paul Twitchell

[Paul Twitchell]

Illuminated Way Press edition. Refer to Part Three of this book.]

After leaving the Self-Revelation Church in Washington, D.C., Twitchell came in contact with Kirpal Singh, the founder of Ruhani Satsang. It was Kirpal Singh who was to have the greatest influence of any teacher on Twitchell's spiritual life. In fact, years later Twitchell would create his own movement, Eckankar, based almost entirely on the teachings of Kirpal Singh and Ruhani Satsang.

Kirpal Singh was a disciple of the Radhasoami Satsang Beas master, Sawan Singh. He was initiated in 1924 and served his guru steadfastly for over twenty-four years. In 1948, after Sawan Singh died and bequeathed his spiritual ministry to Jagat Singh, Kirpal Singh claimed that he was the true heir to his guru's mission. Subsequently, he founded a new movement named Ruhani Satsang, which was a center "for imparting purely spiritual teachings and training for mankind, irrespective of class barriers, such as caste, colour, creed, sect, age, education or advocacy."

[Kirpal Singh, *Ruhani Satsang: Science of Spirituality* (Delhi: Ruhani Satsang, 1970), page 1.]

It was in the year 1955 that Kirpal Singh made his first tour of the United States. In that same year, Twitchell was initiated and became a follower of Kirpal Singh and his Satsang.

[Kirpal Singh, *Heart to Heart Talks, Volume I* (Delhi: Ruhani Satsang, 1975), page 53.]

For over eight years, Twitchell kept in friendly contact with Kirpal Singh. In the latter part of the 1950's (1956/1957) Twitchell lived in Washington, D.C., and attended the satsangs (meetings) held by Tricholan Singh Khanna, who was Kirpal Singh's first representative in the United States. On such occasions, Twitchell would bring his spiritual writings and share them with the other satsangis (as initiates of Kirpal Singh are called). Some of those same satsangis are still alive today.

Tricholan Singh Khanna and Betty Shifflet

It was around this time (1956/1957) that Twitchell told Betty Shifflet and Wave Sanderson (both initiates of Kirpal Singh) at a dinner date that Master Kirpal Singh had appeared in his Nuri Sarup (light body) over the weekend and dictated some of the book to him. In this regard, Kirpal Singh comments:

"Paul Twitchell used to write to me every week, 'Master came and sat down on the chair and dictated his teachings to me. He published them in the Tiger's Fang.'"

[Kirpal Singh, *Heart to Heart Talks, Volume II* (Delhi: Ruhani Satsang, 1975), page 205.]

Writes Twitchell:

"I have talked with and taken down the words of Kirpal Singh who appeared in my apartment in Nauri-raup [sic], his light body, although his physical body was six-thousand miles away in India."

[Paul Twitchell, *"Eckankar: The Bilocation Philosophy," Orion Magazine* (January, 1964).]

Although Paul Twitchell continued to follow Kirpal Singh and Ruhani Satsang until 1966, he joined another spiritual movement, Scientology, in the late 1950's.

L. Ron Hubbard and Scientology

"Ron Hubbard was trying to get people out of their body with his HCA courses, but frankly, he was failing badly. When I was a staff member, occasions came up that I was asked to help some member of the graduating class to get a reality on out-of-body experiences...Hubbard would never acknowledge this ability of mine, and after leaving him I did a lot of experimenting. . . ."

--Paul Twitchell

[Paul Twitchell in a personal letter to John and Ann Fish, dated June 5, 1965.]

"In the early 1950's Jack Hapner who founded the Personal Creative Freedoms Foundation and Charles Burnek who founded the Ability Center and Paul Twitchell and myself were students of L. Ron Hubbard studying Dianetics and Scientology."

--Fredricka Sutton

[Fredricka Sutton in a letter to the editor of the Movement Newspaper, dated May 12, 1973.]

Paul Twitchell joined Scientology--the religious outcome of Dianetics--in or around 1958. It appears that Twitchell was a staff member of the group and had attained the much sought after title a Clear.

[Paul Twitchell, op. cit.]

Although very little is known of Twitchell's association with L. Ron Hubbard and Scientology, it is quite evident that the group's teachings left a profound effect on him. Three of Twitchell's later works, **The Flute of God**, **Letters to Gail (Volume One and Two)**, and **The Far Country** contain Scientologist and Dianetic terminology. In a personal letter to Mr. Fish, dated February 6, 1961, Twitchell writes:

"Sometime ago I wrote and requested a couple of things I left with you. 1) "The Science of Survival" & The Yellow Booklets, "Technique 80."

All three of the quoted books are Scientology publications. In a later letter, dated May 6, 1961, Twitchell writes:

"Want to make a couple of trips into western Canada before going South. Like to see a Scientologist living up in central British Columbia who I know very well. . . Want to see Rosina Mann again in England."

[Paul Twitchell in a personal letter to Mr. Fish, dated June 5, 1965. Twitchell had extensive correspondence with the Fish's during the 1960's.]

Both of the preceding letters were written by Twitchell to a Scientologist auditor who later joined Eckankar. The "Rosina Mann" mentioned in the above excerpt was considered one of the best "auditors" in England. In a letter, dated May 23, 1963, to Gail Atkinson, Twitchell devotes several pages to L. Ron Hubbard's teachings regarding "Tone Scales." Remarks Twitchell:

"This is a unique yardstick drawn up by Ron Hubbard a number of years ago, and is one of the best for determining where an individual stands on the existence scale of life."

[Paul Twitchell, Letters to Gail, Volume One (San Diego: Illuminated Way Press, 1977), May 23, 1963.]

Although Paul Twitchell did not stay very long in Scientology, he did refer to many of L. Ron Hubbard's practices in his own writings on Eckankar.

Paul Twitchell also makes several references to a teacher named "Bernard," who ultimately settled in England. In light of Part Three of this book, it could well be that "Bernard" is a cover-name for Hubbard. Note that the same amount of letters are in each name; also, L. Ron Hubbard lived in England during the early 1960's. However, it may be that "Bernard" was one of the Self-

Realization Fellowship monks whom Twitchell had close contact with. Refer to Part Three of this book.

Gail Atkinson

After an assortment of jobs--which included working for the Seattle Post Intelligencer -- Twitchell met Gail Atkinson, a young college student. Recalls Twitchell:

"We met in the Seattle Public Library in 1963. She had a part-time job there while she attended the University of Washington as a full-time student. . . I wouldn't marry Gail until she turned twenty-one. I wanted her to understand that our marriage would be for keeps. She persisted and I persisted. I went to San Francisco in late November of '64 and left her in Seattle. Then I couldn't stand it there without her so I drove back to her home near South Bend, Washington, and married her."

[Brad Steiger, In My Soul I Am Free (San Diego: Illuminated Way Press, 1974), pages 65-66.]

Before Twitchell and Gail Atkinson were married in 1964, Kirpal Singh made his second tour of the United States in 1963. At that time, Twitchell brought his wife-to-be, Gail, to see the eastern adept. She attended the satsangs held both in San Francisco and Seattle. Finally, Paul presented Gail to the Ruhani Satsang master and she received initiation into the path of surat shabd yoga. The records of both Paul and Gail's initiation under Kirpal Singh are currently on file at Sawan-Kirpal Ashram in Old Delhi, India.

For a number of years I could not trace Twitchell's initiation records. For example, Thakar Singh, one-time spiritual head at Sawan Ashram, wrote to me in a personal letter (dated October 10, 1977): "It is regretted [sic] to inform you that the record regarding Mr. Paul Twitchell is not available over here. There has been a search so many times, I feel no hope of finding it now." The files at Sawan Ashram have been subject to a variety of mistreatment since the death of Kirpal Singh in 1974. In some cases, the records of initiates were destroyed; in others, misplaced. When I visited Sawan Ashram in the summer of 1978, I found the classification system to be in a total disarray. It is not surprising, therefore, that Twitchell's file could not be traced. However, after Thakar Singh's removal from Sawan Ashram (there is a continuing controversy over Thakar's systematic abuse--sexually and violently--of women), the records were recently discovered. For more on this see The Delhi Connection.

Although Twitchell had brought Gail Atkinson to see his spiritual mentor in 1963, he broke off formal ties with Kirpal Singh and his group shortly thereafter.

The Tiger's Fang: A Broken Tooth

*"Master Kirpal Singh spoke briefly of these masters when he took me through the several invisible worlds in 1957. The sotry [sic] of this trip has been recorded in my book **The Tiger's Fang**."*

--Paul Twitchell

[Paul Twitchell, "The God Eaters," Psychic Observer (November 1964), page 11.]

In 1963, Paul Twitchell sent in manuscript form his book, The Tiger's Fang, to Kirpal Singh in Delhi, India. Kirpal Singh did not approve of the work because the inner experiences Twitchell described having were not complete or accurate.

Reno H. Sirrine in a personal letter to the author, dated February 22, 1977. Writes Sirrine: "Master Kirpal Singh told me that he did not return the manuscript, The Tiger's Fang, because

many of the inner experiences he described were not complete or accurate."

About this episode, Kirpal Singh comments:

"I tell you one American was initiated by me--I've got the initiation report in his own handwriting. Then he wrote to me, "The Master's Form appears to me inside." That form used to speak to him, dictate to him, inside. And all that dictation was put into a book and the manuscript was sent to me in 1963. Later he sent me another letter, "Return my book, The Tiger's Fang." I returned his book. That was dictated by me on the inner planes, and that's all right. He changed that book before printing; where he mentioned my name, he changed it to another guru's name. . ."

[Kirpal Singh, Heart to Heart Talks, Volume One , page 53.]

The year 1963 was to prove to be a pivotal time for Paul Twitchell, for not only did he break off friendly ties with Kirpal Singh, but he also began to prepare the foundation for his own movement.

[Chapter 3 - The Transformation](#)

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Chapter Three

THE TRANSFORMATION

Laying the Foundation

After Paul Twitchell severed his association with Kirpal Singh, he began to formulate the basis for his own movement. From late 1963 to October 1965, Twitchell laid the groundwork for Eckankar, his own spiritual counterpart to Ruhani Satsang, Scientology, and several other religious and occult groups. He wrote a number of articles on his new movement for magazines such as **Orion**, **Search**, and **Psychic Observer**.

"*Paul Twitchell, Man of Parts*," an interview by Jack Jarvis of the Seattle Post Intelligencer, appears to be the first article written about Twitchell and his new group, Eckankar. The interview was conducted on July 9, 1963. Twitchell's later article, "The Square Peg," was written in response to Jarvis' interview. Twitchell claimed to have been besieged with telephone calls and mail asking, "what in heaven's name is a Cliff-Hanger?" In the "Square Peg," Twitchell responded:

"The Cliff-Hanger is a one-man cult. I am the original Cliff-Hanger and its sole disciple. This zany character is called the vanguard of a new religion, entitled "Eckankar," a Hindu word meaning union with God. This unorthodox philosophy received a wide welcome among the European intellectuals and college circles following the publishing of my works in European Magazines. The Cliff-Hanger seeks solace in meditation and bi-location experiences common in the lives of the Old Christian Savants."

"*Eckankar, The Bilocation Philosophy*," published by Orion Magazine of Lakemont, Georgia, in January 1964, seems to be Paul Twitchell's first public article entirely devoted to his new movement. In the "Bilocation Philosophy," Twitchell writes:

"Eckankar, the philosophy of out of body experience, is that understanding which I have gained from bi-location excursions similar to those in the lives of saints of all faiths. Eckankar is the study of bi-location experience."

[Paul Twitchell, "Eckankar: The Bilocation Philosophy," Orion Magazine (January 1964).]

In the same article, Twitchell explains the difference between Eckankar and the orthodox Eastern philosophies:

"The orthodox Eastern Philosophies teach that man must become one with God, but I cannot hold to this concept. The individual self of man becomes a coworker of God, not a part of the unity of Him, in the sense of being one with the divine source, anyways, for we are dwelling in the body of God..." [Ibid.]

Although Eckankar, according to Twitchell, was not "officially" founded until October 22, 1965, it did, nevertheless, have several years of preparation behind it. The Psychic Observer based in Southern Pines, North Carolina, published several of Twitchell's articles prior to 1965. "The Cliff-Hanger," printed in July of 1964, expounds Twitchell's definition of the "enigmatic one" and of the Cliff-Hanger's philosophy--Eckankar:

"Ecka

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philosophy I have developed for the Cliff Hanger. It is based on Shabd-yoga, a way out form of yoga. The word is the Hindu locution for the cosmic sound current which is known in our vernacular as the cosmic river of God."

In a later article, *The God Eaters*, dated November 1964, for *Psychic Observer*, Twitchell elaborates on the impetus behind Eckankar:

"Eckankar is the philosophy of phardar pax Latehue wala, or what you know as the Cliff Hangers. This grew out of my visits to Agam Des, the land of the God Eaters. The basic axiom of this philosophy is: Power is the only force generated by Occult knowledge."

It was thus by a series of articles on the philosophy of Eckankar and on the eccentric personality of the "Cliff Hanger" that Twitchell laid down the public groundwork for Eckankar. Brad Steiger, in his biography of Twitchell, *In My Soul I Am Free*, asked Paul when he really began to settle down and start to formulate how to spread the message of Eckankar. Answered Twitchell,

"probably when my sister Kay Dee died in 1959."

In response to Steiger's question on when he changed from being a "Cliff-Hanger" to a spiritual adept, Twitchell replied:

"The switchover from the Cliff Hanger to Eck began taking place after I met my present wife, Gail. She insisted that I do something with my knowledge and abilities."
[Brad Steiger, *In My Soul I Am Free* (San Diego: Illuminated Way Press, 1974), page 64.]

After securing lecture time from Edna Rice at the California Parapsychology Foundation in San Diego, Twitchell began a six-month tenure teaching the art of bilocation. Although the auditorium where Twitchell gave his lecture series was almost always filled to capacity, it was not his speaking engagements that captured the bulk of his followers. Rather, it was his correspondence courses on Eckankar which attracted most of his devotees (or "chelas" as he called them) to him and his new philosophy.

Jim Peebles in his paper, *Eckankar: The Ancient Science of Soul Travel* (Term paper; California State University, Northridge, 1977), writes: "Eckankar, though it is non-profit, is also quite expensive. The texts, which a devout Eckist is expected to purchase, range in price from \$2.00 to \$10.00, the average price being around \$7.00 (remember there are over twenty texts). . . An Eckist is also required to take at least one set of discourses each year. By purchasing these on a time payment plan he will pay \$85.00 for each set (there are seven adult sets now)." Peebles' paper was written in 1977; the prices have since increased considerably.

In the July/August 1965 issue of *Orion Magazine*, Twitchell advertised *The Illuminated Way to God*. It was one of his first such advertisements. It reads as follows:

Bilocation is the Illuminated Path of the Supreme Consciousness. It is the secret way that all masters use to reach the ultimate of all universes. One must learn the separation of spirit from body by his own volition. It increases awareness, helps solve problems and gives a spiritual insight into one's own akashic records and the hidden worlds. New techniques. For information, write: Paul Twitchell, P. O. Box 13052, San Diego, California 92113.

Later, Twitchell took out full page advertisements in *Orion Magazine* with his photograph and

the headline caption, **ECKANKAR, The Secret Science of Soul Travel**. Similar advertisements were also taken out in other occult magazines, including the New Cosmic Star.

According to Twitchell, Eckankar was not "officially" founded until October 22, 1965. On that illustrious night, Twitchell claims to have received the "Rod of Power" (passing of the successorship) from Rebazar Tarzs, a Tibetan monk supposedly over five-hundred years old. The Tibetan, according to Twitchell's account, had appeared to him since the early 1950's in his atma sarup (soul/light body). Concerning Rebazar Tarzs and the founding of Eckankar, Twitchell writes:

"We were married in 1964 in San Francisco, and shortly afterwards Rebazar Tarzs began to appear and give me intensive instructions. He had been appearing regularly in the latter fifties, but he said that those sessions had only been designed to prepare me for the exhaustive drills which now faced me. I was told to move south, to choose San Diego for our home. My first out-of-town lecture was at Long Beach, where three gentle ladies, two widows and a spinster came. I decided that I could lecture as well to three as to three hundred. Word began to get around about Eck, so I agreed to write the monthly discourses and to offer instructions by mail. I went from three chelas to thousands in less than three years."

[Brad Steiger, *op. cit.*, pages 64-65.]

The Growth of Eckankar

"There is too much dishonesty among those who try to get tax shelters because they claim to be religious groups. God didn't establish nontaxable foundations, so why should I try to get under such claims? If Eck cannot take care of itself, then it can be of little value to anyone else."

[--Paul Twitchell, 1967]

[*Ibid.*, page 70.]

After his first out-of-town lecture and the inception of his mail correspondence courses, Twitchell began to attract a large following. It was with the great influx of seekers and the money that came with them which prompted Twitchell to incorporate Eckankar as a business organization under license in the State of Nevada. Twitchell had previously moved his original center of operation from San Diego, California, to Las Vegas, Nevada, in order to avoid heavy taxation. In response to Steiger's question concerning the business status of Eckankar, Twitchell replied:

"I do not run Eckankar as a non-profit organization. Most people in this line of work do indeed use the Religious non-profit organization provision as an escape clause on their taxes. Eckankar is licensed in the state of Nevada as a business organization. I do this because I feel that it is only proper and fitting that I make my own way instead of trying to get under a tax shelter. It is hard, of course, but I manage to do it."

[*Ibid.*, page 69.]

Twitchell's hard line against tax exempt religious organizations, however, did not last long. Later, under mounting pressure from Eckankar board members, he had Eckankar's original status changed to that of a "non-profit" religious organization. The Eckankar Board Members included Dr. Bluth and Dr. Wiggelsworth.

Outside of the mail correspondence courses (and the assorted Eckankar advertisements), Twitchell penned a number of books on Eckankar, and even authored a featured column in the

New Cosmic Star. Twitchell's first three books, *The Tiger's Fang*, *The Flute of God*, and *An Introduction to Eckankar*, appeared to have all sold well. However, it was not until Steiger's chapter on Twitchell in the *Enigma of Reincarnation* (1967) that Twitchell's name caught hold of the general reading public. Steiger claims to have had tremendous response from his readers to the two chapters he included on Paul Twitchell. Shortly thereafter, Steiger wrote Paul's official biography, ***In My Soul I Am Free***, for Lancer Books, Inc.

Later, Twitchell had contractual problems with Lancer Books, Inc. Evidently, he was given royalty on only 25,000 books, when in actuality Lancer Books had sold over 100,000 of Twitchell's books. Lancer Books soon went bankrupt and out of business.

Paul Twitchell and Eckankar had become a marketable item. The biography, *In My Soul I Am Free* and Twitchell's own work, *Eckankar: The Key to Secret Worlds*, became bestsellers for Lancer Books. Twitchell and his new group had, indeed, caught the attention of the public. Even **Look Magazine** wrote a brief article on the "World's leading authority on Eckankar--The Ancient Science of Soul Travel."

According to Brad Steiger (personal telephone conversation with the author, op. cit.), Paul Twitchell used quotations from *Look* out of context. *Look* was belittling Twitchell and his "Eck" group, and sarcastically termed the group's founder, "The World's leading authority on Soul Travel."

Jim Peebles in his paper *Eckankar: The Ancient Science of Soul Travel* remarks on the rapid growth of Eckankar in America:

Since the early days of Eckankar, which began with Paul personally typing the discourses each month, the movement has grown rapidly; and so did Paul's need to express the teachings in writing. Between the publication of the Tiger's Fang in 1965, and Paul's death in 1971, he managed to author an additional twenty texts, seven complete sets of discourses (not to mention the discourses which he wrote for children), a monthly letter called a "wisdom note" to his chelas, a very active series of lectures each year, and numerous articles which appeared in various publications by Eckankar.

[Jim Peebles, op. cit., page 11.]

The rapid growth of Eckankar had come from three areas: 1) Paul Twitchell's mail correspondence courses, which he advertised extensively in occult and religious outlets; 2) Twitchell's indefinable charisma; and 3) the times in which Eckankar developed.

The single greatest factor to Eckankar's astounding growth, outside of its spiritual message and Twitchell's personality, was the time in which Eckankar blossomed. The late 1960's were a time of considerable discontent in American society. Eckankar was born in the very midst of a growing disenchantment within secular society for "orthodox" religions. The rebellious youth were turning toward the East; mysticism, yoga, and Zen were the "in" thing. Eckankar, however, was different. It was unique in that it took from the East teachings regarding karma, shabd yoga, and reincarnation while essentially remaining a Western-based movement. To many Eckankar offered the only real solution to life's problems. The 1960's were finally a time for new avenues of thought. Eckankar offered one such new exploration--an exploration into higher consciousness.

[The Advent of Darwin Gross](#)

Chapter Four

THE ADVENT OF DARWIN GROSS

Translation and Successorship

John Paul Twitchell died on September 17, 1971, of arteriosclerotic heart disease. He "translated" (Eck terminology for death) at approximately 12:50 a.m., in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he was scheduled to give a lecture on Eckankar.

[Copy of Paul Twitchell's Death Certificate, Ohio Department of Health, Division of Vital Statistics.]

As with his birth, several stories have cropped up concerning Twitchell's unexpected death (translation). A few Eckists, including Jim Peebles, believed that he was poisoned to death; some state it was in Spain, others claim in Czechoslovakia. No one seems quite sure. At the time of his death, Dr. Louis Bluth, one-time President of Eckankar, reported seeing Twitchell's soul carried out in a celestial cloud of light. Yet, he later changed his story, claiming instead that Twitchell had disobeyed the orders of the Vairagi Masters and was carried away in chains. Whichever story one believes--even if one belongs to Eckankar--the fact remains that an autopsy was performed and the coroner's findings were that Twitchell died of a heart attack. [Ibid.]

The Controversial "Five Year Plan"

When Twitchell first took over as the "Living Eck Master" in 1965, he stated at the very outset that he had been given a "five-year" mission, and that after those five years a new master would be appointed.

[Woodrow Nichols and Mark Albrecht, op. cit., page 19.]

Yet when 1970 came around (five years after his proposed statement), Twitchell told his followers at the Fourth World-Wide Eckankar Seminar that he had been given a five-year extension by the Highest Lord, the Sugmad, because the second Mahanta had failed his preliminary testing. Therefore, he would continue as the Mahanta until the third one was ready. [Ibid.]

Nichols and Albrecht in their paper, "Eckankar: The Ancient Science of Deception," have researched extensively Twitchell's self-proposed "five-year plan." They consider it to be a crucial point of controversy within Eckankar. Below is the essence of their study.

By January 1971, the dispute within Eckankar had reached such proportions, Twitchell had to devote his entire letter of that month to quelling the disturbance:

"There is a lot of idle chatter going on by some chelas in Eck who make the unusual claims that they are going to be the next Mahanta, the Living Eck Master. But whatever you hear about this can be taken with a grain of salt, as the old expression goes it simply isn't true."

Dr. Bluth attributes this change of plan to Paul's attachment to Gail. . . Paul told Bluth that he was training a

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Eck began leaving the rold at this time sensing a betrayal. Paul did not quell the disturbance.

Even in May 1971, the storm was still raging. C. Lydon Harrell, Jr., Twitchell's attorney, signed a letter dated May 1, 1971, on his letterhead, addressed to the chelas, that once again states that the next Mahanta is a child and won't be ready for fifteen years.

Paul Twitchell never lived to carry out his five-year extension that had been granted to him by the Order of Vairagi, the ascended Eck Masters. He never lived to pass the rod of power to another Mahanta, or even an interim Master. [Ibid., pages 20-21.]

The Advent of Darwin Gross

"The next Mahanta is about fifteen years away. He is now in training but where he is nobody knows and won't know for a long time yet."

[--Paul Twitchell (January 1971)]

[Ibid., page 20.]

Sri Darwin Gross, Portland, Oregon Eck Mahadis, and professional engineer was announced at the Fifth World-Wide Seminar of Eckankar, to be the new living Eck Master.

[Eckankar News Release (October 1971)]

The Eckankar News Release reads: *"The announcement was made before an assembly of over a thousand followers at the Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas. Gross known in spiritual circles as Dap Ren succeeds Paul Twitchell, author 30 books, master and founder of the present, world-wide Eckankar movement who died (translated) in Cincinnati Sept. 17, 1971."*

It came as a surprise and a shock to many Eckists when Paul Twitchell died suddenly on September 17, 1971. Many of Twitchell's followers had expected their master to live at least another five (if not fifteen) years. It came as a bigger surprise and shock to some of those same Eckists when Darwin Gross was proclaimed the new "Living Eck Master" a month after Twitchell's demise. Shortly thereafter, several esteemed Eckists, including Dr. Bluth (President of Eckankar and Paul's personal doctor) and Edward Pecen (Paul's personal bodyguard and confidante), left Eckankar disclaiming Darwin Gross and Gail Atkinson.

[Edward Pecen, personal interview with the author, November 1977.]

Part of the reason behind the astonishment of many Eckists over the advent of Darwin Gross was because he had been in Eckankar only since 1969. Nichols and Albrecht retell the controversy:

"According to Bluth, Gross was flown to Las Vegas. . . from Portland, Oregon, where Gross was immediately granted a fifth initiation and briefed extensively for days so that he could pass the scrutiny of the experts. None of the experts were fooled, and there was a fairly large exodus from the movement at the time, including Dr. Bluth and Dr. Wiggelsworth."

"Gail had claimed to have had a vision in the middle of the night where Paul had come to her in Nuri Sarup body and told her that Darwin Gross was to be his successor. There was no more mention of the child that Twitchell supposedly had been training."

[Woodrow Nichols and Mark Albrecht, op. cit., pages 23-24.]

Jim Peebles makes a similar observation:

"Here one should remember that Paul left no word as to who his successor should be. . . As it was, Darwin Gross first became interested in Eckankar in 1969, thus he was an Eck Chela for less than a complete two years at the time he was declared to be the new living Eck Master (i.e., Paul's successor)."

[Jim Peebles, op. cit., page 12]

Darwin Gross was revealed as the new "Living Eck Master" in Las Vegas, when Gail Atkinson Twitchell, Paul's widow, walked over to Darwin and presented him with a blue carnation. Shortly thereafter, to the bewilderment of a number of Eckists, Gail and Darwin were married. However, their marriage was short-lived. In early 1978, Darwin sent a personal letter to every Eck chela in the world informing them that he and Gail were getting divorced. A couple of years later, Darwin got remarried, but it lasted only a few months and he got the marriage annulled. The ramifications of Darwin's divorce, remarriage, and annulment on the membership in Eckankar in the 1970's is difficult to ascertain. Yet, it can be presumed by the continued growth of Eckankar in the United States that its ultimate impact, like Darwin and Gail's marriage, was nominal.

Gail Atkinson, according to the personal letter sent to all Eckists, is still a member of Eckankar and will continue to support the activities of the Eck Master and the group.

Post-Twitchellian Eckankar

I have used the term "post-Twitchellian" because I think it best emphasizes the crucial importance of Paul Twitchell on Eckankar.

The growth of Eckankar, since the death of its founder, Paul Twitchell, and the advent of Darwin Gross, has been remarkable. Although Darwin has only authored a few books (including the small booklet, *Eckankar: A Way of Life*), as compared to Twitchell's enormous output (over sixty texts), Eckankar has increased its membership almost triple.

The exact figures have not, as of yet, been released by Eckankar. But in 1970 the membership was reported not to exceed twenty-thousand. In 1991 it is estimated that the number is somewhere between forty-thousand and sixty-thousand core members.

Since Darwin's acceptance of the mantleship, Eckankar established its Headquarters in Menlo Park--an impressive million dollar building. [Now under the leadership of Harold Klemp, the central headquarters is in Minneapolis, Minnesota.] Yet the most enterprising of Darwin's projects was to build a spiritual center in Sedona, Arizona. The project, however, had to be abandoned due to lack of finances and a devastating lawsuit taken against Eckankar over property rights in the Sedona area.

[See Sedona's Red Rock News (November 5, 1980) for more on the lawsuit taken over Eckankar's land holdings.]

The Third Living Eck Master: Harold Klemp

In October of 1981, Darwin Gross passed on the mantleship of Eckankar to Harold Klemp, a long-standing Eckist. The event took place in Los Angeles, California, at the World-Wide Seminar. For many members, the announcement came as an abrupt transition. Apparently, to ease in the appointment of Harold Klemp, Darwin Gross agreed to work at the International Office in Menlo Park in an advisory capacity. But all did not go well and in 1983 a severe break occurred between Darwin Gross and Harold Klemp, which led to Gross' removal and subsequent excommunication from the fold.

[See Part Five for a detailed examination of this most unusual chapter in Eckankar's history.]

Although we have examined briefly Paul Twitchell's life and work up to to his death and the

successorship of Darwin Gross in Eckankar, we have not, as of yet, studied the most crucial and controversial aspect of Eckankar: namely, the untold story of Paul Twitchell. The first two parts have served as an introduction, for what follows is the most intriguing, yet the most disputed, aspect of Twitchell's life and work.

NOTES

1. Copy of Paul Twitchell's Death Certificate, Ohio Department of Health, Division of Vital Statistics.
2. Ibid.
3. Woodrow Nichols and Mark Albrecht, op. cit., page 19.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., pages 20-21.
6. Ibid., page 20.
7. The Eckankar News Release reads: "The announcement was made before an assembly of over a thousand followers at the Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas. Gross known in spiritual circles as Dap Ren succeeds Paul Twitchell, author of 30 books, master and founder of the present, world-wide Eckankar movement who died (translated) in Cincinnati Sept. 17, 1971."
8. Edward Pecen, personal interview with the author, November 1977.
9. Woodrow Nichols and Mark Albrecht, op. cit., pages 23-24.
10. Jim Peebles, op. cit., page 12.
11. Gail Atkinson, according to the personal letter sent to all Eckists, is still a member of Eckankar and will continue to support the activities of the Eck Master and the group.
12. I have used the term "post-Twitchellian" because I think it best emphasizes the crucial importance of Paul Twitchell on Eckankar.
13. The exact figures have not, as of yet, been released by Eckankar. But in 1970 the membership was reported not to exceed twenty-thousand. In the early 1990's it is estimated that the number is anywhere between twenty and forty thousand core members.
14. See Sedona's Red Rock News (November 5, 1980) for more on the lawsuit taken over Eckankar's land holdings.

THE COVER-UP

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Chapter Five

THE COVER-UP

Who is Sudar Singh?

Paul Twitchell claims he had two teachers who taught him the path of Eckankar. The first was Satguru Sudar Singh, who, according to Twitchell, made his residence in Allahabad, India, until the late 1930's or 1940's (Twitchell does not seem sure). [1]

The second was Rebazar Tarzs, a Tibetan monk reputedly over five hundred years old. With the latter, there is no way to verify his existence because Twitchell alleges that the Tibetan monk can only be visited via "soul travel".

As stated earlier, Twitchell maintains that he first met Sudar Singh in Paris, France, when he was in his teens. Later, he states that he and his sister went to Sudar Singh's ashram in Allahabad and lived with the guru for over a year. Although Twitchell readily recounts his experiences with the Indian adept, he curiously gives no dates, except one found in **Eckankar: The Key To Secret Worlds**, concerning his visit. [2]

[1] In the book **In My Soul I Am Free**, Twitchell claims that Sudar Singh was one-hundred and five years old when he died. While in another work, he alleges that the guru died in his late nineties. Curiously, in the book **Eckankar: The Key to Secret Worlds**, Twitchell writes that Sudar Singh was a very young man when he met Rebazar Tarzs in Agra, India, in 1885. If we accept Twitchell's claim that Sudar Singh died at one-hundred and five years old in either the late 1930's or 1940's, it makes the Allahabad guru over forty years old in 1885. The implications are obvious: Does Twitchell consider "forty years old" (or more) to be a very young man? Further suspicion about the actual existence of "Sudar Singh" arises when we learn that Twitchell's account of his master is based upon the life story of Baba Jaimal Singh, the founder of the Radha Soami Satsang at Beas (refer to the appendix on plagiarism). Although it is only conjecture, it would appear that Twitchell coined the name "Sudar" from the longer name "Sudarshan", who was a nephew of Shiv Dayal Singh, the originator of the Radhasoami path. This same "Sudarshan Singh" also resided for a time in Allahabad, India. In summation, Twitchell has used the name "Sudar Singh" (which he most likely lifted from Julian P. Johnson's book, *With A Great Master in India*, since it contains a section on Sudarshan Singh) as a cover name for several different teachers, but most notably for Kirpal Singh.

[2] Writes Twitchell,

" . . . I found this to be true of Sudar Singh, the strange mystic of Allahabad, in the summer of 1938, when I visited him with my step-sister."

firms that he was the source for his fictitious "1922" birth date.

[An interesting sidebar here, connected to our previous footnote: Sudarshan Singh, the nephew of Shiv Dayal Singh, died in 1936 at Soamibagh, just outside of Agra city.]

According to Steiger's account (which also gives no dates), it would be in the late 1930's, early 1940's, when Twitchell visited India. Yet, according to Twitchell's actual birth date (1908-1912), it would have to be the late 1920's when he visited India. In both cases, however, there is no proof, documentary or otherwise, to support Twitchell's self-claimed travels to India. The doubtful nature of Twitchell's travels gains further support when we learn that the first mention of his guru Sudar

Twitchell makes no reference to the elusive Indian master. [3]

As Twitchell's travels to India at a young age are extremely doubtful, his account of Sudar Singh (whom he claims to have met at the same time) also becomes highly questionable. There is no indication in Twitchell's actual life (versus his created one) or written works that Sudar Singh is a real person. The true identity of Sudar Singh is intimately tied with Twitchell's efforts to cover-up his past associations with certain teachers. This cover-up was started by Twitchell in January 1964, and continues today under the present Living Eck Master, Harold Klemp.

Today, in Eckankar's extensive literature, there is no mention whatsoever of Swami Premananda or Kirpal Singh. Most Eckists have never even heard of either of these two gurus. The reason why is because from 1964 to 1971, in a slow but finally accelerated process, Twitchell had both names, which appeared throughout his original writings, *The Tiger's Fang*, *The Flute of God*, and other assorted articles, edited out. He replaced the names of his actual teachers, Swami Premananda and Kirpal Singh, with the names "Sudar Singh" and "Rebazar Tarzs." And, although Twitchell spent a total of eight years studying under Kirpal Singh, he denied in 1971 that he was ever initiated by him.

The cover-up was commenced by Twitchell after the "Tiger's Fang incident" in 1963. It was in his preparation for founding Eckankar which led Twitchell to create a whole new mythology--a mythology which included a new biography for himself. Twitchell's biography included new teachers, new travels, and new insights. Yet, Twitchell could not destroy all of his previous articles, associations, or his family heritage. These remnants were too vast and too scattered to eradicate. It is from these records that we find the "old" Paul Twitchell.

[3] In none of Twitchell's writings before 1964 is there any mention of Sudar Singh. However, Twitchell does refer to Kirpal Singh, Swami Premananda, and L. Ron Hubbard before this date.

Cover-Up: First Phase

Twitchell's first reference to Satguru Sudar Singh was not meant as an introduction for his readers (or his followers) to his actual, but hidden, past; rather, it was meant as his first preface to his new biography--a biography which rapidly changed with the growth of Eckankar. Although Twitchell's real life narrative included a bevy of different gurus, teachers, and movements, it did not include "Sudar Singh" or "Rebazar Tarzs." Both gurus served only as mythological characterizations of Twitchell's genuine and imagined biography. Their existence was factual to some extent as "cover-names" for real gurus. They were so named perhaps because of Twitchell's vivid occult imagination, abetted by his knowledge of Theosophical literature on the "Great White Masters."

Twitchell's first cover-up or editing appears in the January 1964 issue of *Orion Magazine*, where he introduces Sudar Singh for the first time. It reads:

"I began my study of bilocation under the tutelage of Satguru Sudar Singh, in Allahabad, India. Later, I switched to Sri Kirpal Singh of Old Delhi. Both were teaching the Shabda Yoga, that which is called the Yoga of the Sound Current. I had to learn to leave my body at will and return, without effort. Also among my writings are numerous discourses from many master [sic], in the flesh and those on the inner planes. I have talked with and taken down the words of Kirpal Singh who appeared in my apartment in his Nari Raup, his light body, although his physical body was six thousand miles away in India."

In the entire article, there is no reference whatsoever to Rebazar Tarzs. Yet, in 1966, when Twitchell republished the article almost verbatim in the booklet, Introduction to Eckankar, he changed the words bilocation and shabda yoga to "Eckankar"; and the two times he mentions Kirpal Singh, he changes to "Rebazar Tarzs" and "Sudar Singh" respectively. The original article, although edited later and more thoroughly, was itself a product of editing, for the name "Sudar Singh" is actually a cover name for Swami Premananda, who was Twitchell's first yoga teacher.

[4] Refer to the appendix on Cover-up for a detailed study of Twitchell's editing.]

Of the several articles reprinted in Introduction to Eckankar, most have undergone name replacements. A total of at least eight names have been edited out and replaced with a hierarchy of Eck masters. The list of names edited out includes Sawan Singh, Kirpal Singh, and Swami Premananda. Each guru has either been replaced by "Sudar Singh" or "Rebazar Tarzs," while the main text remains untouched. Although Twitchell attempted to do a scrupulous job of redacting, he made one slight error in the index to Introduction to Eckankar. The editor lists the name "Sawan Singh" as occurring on page five of the text; yet, on page five, it reads "Sudar Singh." The first four editions of the booklet carried the error; the fifth edition finally corrected it. The original article from which the mistake was made was published in the September 1965 issue of Search Magazine. It reads in part:

"From Kabir's day those who have helped spread the doctrine of bilocation were mainly, the leader of the Sikh order, especially Nanka Guru [sic], the founder. Others have been the Sufi saints, e.g., Hafiz, Jalal din Rumi, Shamus Tabriz, and Sawan Singh, Kirpal Singh, St. Anthony of Padua, and the contemporary clergyman, Padre Pie [sic], to name a few."

The reprinted, "Can You Be in Two Places At The Same Time," in the booklet Introduction to Eckankar, reads:

"From Kabir's day, those who have helped spread the doctrine of Soul Travel were mainly the leaders of the Sikh order, especially Nanka Guru [sic], the founder. Others have been the Sufi saints, e.g., Hafiz, Jalal din'l Rumi, Shamus Tabriz, Sudar Singh, St. Anthony of Padua, and the contemporary clergyman, Padre Pio, to name a few." [5]

[5] Paul Twitchell, Introduction to Eckankar (Las Vegas: Illuminated Way Press, 1966), pages 2-6.]

In the original article, Twitchell had mentioned Kirpal Singh three times; in the revised edition his name has been changed to read "Sudar Singh." The original reads:

"Kirpal Singh who is still at his own ashram in India, has the ability to appear to his own people, in his Nuri Sarup body, no matter where they may be. A skill which almost anybody can learn who gets the knack of bilocation. Among my numerous discourses from many gurus in the flesh and those on the inner planes, are those taken down when Kirpal Singh appeared in my apartment in Washington, D.C., in his light body, although his flesh self was six-thousand miles away in India."

The revised article, with name replacements, reads:

"Sudar Singh, who lived in his ashram in India, had the ability to appear to his own people in his Atma Sarup body, no matter where they might be. A skill almost anyone can learn who gets the knack of Soul Travel. . . Among my numerous discourses from many gurus in the flesh and those on the inner planes, are taken down when

Sudar Singh appeared in my apartment in New York City, in his light body, although his flesh self was six thousand miles away in India."

Not only had Twitchell changed the name Kirpal Singh to "Sudar Singh," he also altered certain factors in his past to fit in with his "new" biography. Writes Woodrow Nichols:

"This holy cover-up was nothing new in the previous experience of Paul Twitchell. If we go back to Singh's accusation that there were some facts (descriptions) in The Tiger's Fang that were inaccurate, it should become apparent that Twitchell had a long history of rewriting history." [6]

[6] Woodrow Nichols and Mark Albrecht, "Eckankar: The Ancient Science of Deception," op. cit.

The Flute of God: A Case Study of Re-Editing

Twitchell's enormous editing of names reached a pinnacle when he decided to publish in book form **The Flute of God**. The work was originally printed in installments in Orion Magazine, from 1965 to 1967. The first six chapters of the text profusely mention the names of Kirpal Singh, Sawan Singh, and Jesus Christ. When Twitchell had the book republished, however, he redacted every single mention of Kirpal Singh, Sawan Singh, and Swami Premananda. In some cases, he even edited out the name Jesus and replaced it with "Gopal Das" or other Eckankar Masters. And, although he quotes from the Christian Bible, he even changes the name of his source (to that of the Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad) while retaining the same biblical quote. Below is a comparison study of the two versions. Remember that the Orion version is the earliest, and that Twitchell's editing is primarily "name replacements."

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as it appeared in installments in Orion Magazine. Chapter I - "In The Beginning" (March-April, 1966):

Par. 3: "I remember very well when Swami Premananda, of India, who has a Yoga church in Washington, D. C., said, 'When someone asked Bertrand Russell what his philosophy of Life was, he wrote several volumes of books on the subject.'"

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as published by Illuminated Way Press (1970). Chapter I - "In The Beginning":

Par. 3: "I remember very well when Sudar Singh, the great Eck Master said, 'When someone asked Bertrand Russell what his philosophy of Life was, he wrote several volumes of books on the subject.'"

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as it appeared in installments in Orion Magazine. Chapter I - "In The Beginning" (March-April, 1966):

Par. 15: "I have studied under many teacher [sic], and may yet have to study under more. Like Meher Baba, the Indian saint, who was said to have nineteen teachers to help him gain his place in the universe, I have so far had seven, some outstanding ones, including Sri Kirpal Singh, of Delhi, India."

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as published by Illuminated Way Press (1970). Chapter I - "In The Beginning":

Par. 16: "I have studied under many ECK Masters only they have led me to the highest truth. Like Fubbi Quantz, the ECK saint, who was said to have nineteen

teachers to help him gain his place in the universe, I have also had several, each outstanding, one being Sudar Singh of India."

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as it appeared in installments in Orion Magazine. Chapter I - "In The Beginning" (March-April, 1966):

Par. 16: "Each has had a place in my growth toward the spiritual goal; each are equally great in their work for mankind. However, I have felt a closer kinship and friendliness to Kirpal Singh, who has shown me a lot of the other work during my first year or so under him. Since we have parted he keeps an impartial view toward me and my research. Therefore, if I quote him in these pages it is because I feel that he is sympathetic and interested in my work."

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as published by Illuminated Way Press (1970). Chapter I - "In The Beginning":

Par. 17: "Each has had a place in my growth toward the spiritual goal; each is equally great in his work for mankind. However, I have felt a closer kinship and friendliness to Sudar Singh, who showed me a lot of the other work, during my first year or so under him. Since we have parted he has retained an impartial view toward me and my research. If I quote him in these pages it is because I feel that he is sympathetic and interested in my work and led me to Rebazar Tarzs."

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as it appeared in installments in Orion Magazine. Chapter I - "In The Beginning" (March-April, 1966):

Par. 32: "Life fascinates me. Certain details of life to be worked out are strange. Lying on the bed late at night I watch the pattern of shadows weaving about the room. In the presence of familiar night visitors like Kirpal Singh, or Rebazar Tarzs, a Tibetan Lama, who come often in their Nuri-Sarup, or others, some strangers, some friends, I wonder about life."

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as published by Illuminated Way Press (1970). Chapter I - "In The Beginning":

Par. 34: "Life fascinates me. Certain details of life that have to be worked out are strange. Lying on the bed late at night I watch the pattern of shadows weaving about the room. In the presence of familiar night visitors like Sudar Singh, or Rebazar Tarzs, the ECK Masters who come often in their Nuri-Sarup bodies, or others, some strangers, some friends, I wonder about life."

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as it appeared in installments in Orion Magazine. Chapter II - "The Symbol of The Princes":

Par. 12: "Therefore, the principal (sic) involved here is: 'We live and have our being in the Supreme Being.' Jesus said it in another way as 'we move and have our being in God.' Other savants e.g., Jalalddin Maulana Rumi put it another way, 'Divine Grace is not limited by the conditions of ability, but ability, in fact, is conditioned by Divine Grace.'"

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as published by Illuminated Way Press (1970). Chapter II - "The Symbol of The Princes":

Par. 11: "Therefore, the principle involved here is, 'We live and have our being in the Supreme Being.' Lai Tsi, the Chinese ECK Master, said it this way, 'We live and move and have our being in the SUGMAD.' Other savants state it in a slightly different vein. For instance, Jalaluddin Maulana Rumi said, 'Divine Grace is not limited by the conditions of ability - but ability, in fact, is conditioned by Divine Grace.'"

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as it appeared in installments in Orion Magazine. Chapter II - "The Symbol of The Princes":

Par. 48: "This is what Kirpal Singh speaks of in his discourses. 'We must become the conscious co-worker of God.' Meaning, of course, that once man is freed of his imbalances he inherits the throne and does his work for the whole."

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as published by Illuminated Way Press (1970). Chapter II - "The Symbol of the Princes":

Par. 45: "This is what Sudar Singh spoke of in his dialogues. 'We must become the conscious co-workers of God.'"

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as it appeared in installments in Orion Magazine. Chapter III - "Purification of the Princes" (Sept.-Oct. 1966):

Par. 37: "All masters of earlier days, to name a few: Buddha, Gura Nanak (sic), Christ, Mohammed, Zoroaster, Lao Tse, George Fox, Sawan Singh, Confucius, Krishna and Shankhacharya exhorted us to know ourselves. Kabir says the same thing 'Learn to die a hundred times daily, not once.'"

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as published by Illuminated Way Press (1970). Chapter III - "Purification of the Princes":

Par. 37: "All ECK Masters of earlier days exhorted us to know ourselves. . .Gopal Das says the same thing, 'Learn to die a hundred times daily, not once.'"

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as it appeared in installments in Orion Magazine. Chapter III - "Purification of the Princes" (Sept.-Oct. 1966):

Par. 38: "Christ said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.' Guru Nanak said, 'Be pure that truth may be realized.'"

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as published by Illuminated Way Press (1970). Chapter III - "Purification of the Princes":

Par. 38: "Jesus said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.' Rebazar Tarzs said, 'Be pure so that truth may be known.'"

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as it appeared in installment in Orion Magazine. Ch. I, Par. 41:

"When Jesus looked upon His people and said, 'I cannot tell you more because you cannot hear the whole truth.' He was saying that they were so far down the spiral of life they could not grasp His meaning. To tell them all would bring disorder into their lives, for once exposed to Truth, those not understanding develop hostility."

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as published by Illuminated Way Press (1970). Ch. I, Par. 42:

"When the ECK Master, Gopal Das, looked upon his people and said, 'I cannot tell you more because you cannot hear the whole ECK,' he was saying that they were so far down the spiral of life they could not grasp his meaning. To tell them would bring disorder into their lives, for once exposed to Truth, those not understanding develop hostility."

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as it appeared in installments in Orion Magazine. Ch. I, Par. 44:

"One of my experiences while serving under the Yoga Satsang line of masters, was that I found one of the masters in the guise of a beggar. I had been in difficulty for sometime, and very unhappy over the fact that nothing could be found to solve my problem."

The Flute Of God by Paul Twitchell as published by Illuminated Way Press (1970). Ch. I, Par. 45:

"One of my experiences, while serving under Rebazar Tarzs, was that I found one of the ECK Masters in the guise of a beggar. I had been in difficulty for some time, and was very unhappy over the fact that nothing could be found to solve my problem."

Postscript: The Last Letter

"I have never recognized you as a master, or that you give initiations, and that your work is not in the best interest of spirituality. Your teachings are orthodox, and as a preacher you are not capable of assisting anyone spiritually."

--Paul Twitchell, 1971

(Personal letter to Kirpal Singh of Delhi, India) [7]

"My Saints are Kabir. . . Rumi, Hafiz, Shamus-Tabriz ...and Kirpal Singh of India." --Paul Twitchell, 1964 [8]

"Master Kirpal Singh spoke briefly of these masters when he took me through the several invisible worlds in 1957." --Paul Twitchell, 1964 [9]

"Kirpal Singh who is still living in his own ashram in India, has the ability to appear to his own people, in his Nuri Sarup body, no matter where they might be." --Paul Twitchell, 1965 [10]

"I have studied under many teacher [sic]. I have so far had seven, some outstanding ones, including Sri Kirpal Singh, of Delhi, India." --Paul Twitchell, 1966 [11]

As Paul Twitchell edited out the name Kirpal Singh in every rewrite he undertook, his cover-up grew by the late 1960's to such proportions that he even denied he was once initiated by Kirpal Singh. To many who knew him earlier, Twitchell had gone too far. Several, if not many, disciples of Kirpal Singh had attended satsangs with him; some had even been present at his initiation ceremony in 1955. Yet, Twitchell persisted: he continued to deny that he had any spiritual link with Kirpal Singh. He even went so far as to openly refute on tape that Kirpal Singh

was the successor to Sawan Singh of Radhasoami Satsang Beas (who died in 1948), though it contradicted what he had stated previously in 1965. Claimed Twitchell:

"Guru Nanak became the founder of the Sikh order. Sawan Singh was the last of the Swami group of Masters. . . and Kirpal Singh claimed to become a follower in the same line of masters, and also Charan Singh who was a nephew [sic: Charan Singh is a grandson] of Sawan Singh, but neither one are masters because the mastership of this line stopped at Sawan Singh." [12]

[7] Dorothe Ross, "All That Glistens is Not Gold," *Leadership in Eck* (July-August-September, 1976).

[8] Paul Twitchell, "The Cliff Hanger," *Psychic Observer*, op. cit.

[9] Paul Twitchell, "The God Eaters," *Psychic Observer*, op cit.

[10] Paul Twitchell, "Can You Be In Two Places At The Same Time," *Search* (September 1965), page 22.

[11] Paul Twitchell, "The Flute of God," *Orion Magazine* (March-April 1966), page 32.

[12] Bernadine Burlin, personal letter to the author, dated April 5, 1977.

Yet only five years previously, Twitchell wrote:

"These few who are following the ancient science do so loosely. However, Kirpal Singh, a living Guru, teaches the art (as) closely to the ancient teachings (as) possible, at his ashram in Old Delhi, India."

"The art of exteriorization was revived by Kabir, the Hindu mystic-poet in the sixteenth century and passed through a succession of savants, by secret initiation until Sawan Singh openly started giving initiation to anyone who came to his ashram. When he passed his spiritual mantle to Kirpal Singh, the instructions were to carry out this policy." [13]

The inherent contradictions in Twitchell's denial of his association with Kirpal Singh were too blatant for some Ruhani Satsang initiates to ignore. Several knowledgeable disciples began to give out the actual details of Twitchell's involvement with Kirpal Singh. Even the Ruhani Satsang Master himself commented on Twitchell's unusual actions:

"Yes, Yes. Too much propaganda. I tell you one American was initiated by me--I've got the initiation report in his own handwriting. That is what such-like people will do. They had some little thing, got stuck fast there. Now he's carrying on propaganda. He says he was never initiated by me. He was initiated in 1955. Some people get stuck fast on the way. This little ego is very difficult to get rid of unless there's some kind of protection. This is a living example. He has written other books. I need not mention his name. " [14]

[13] Paul Twitchell, "Ancient Science of Eckankar," publisher unknown (May 1965).

[14] Kirpal Singh, *Heart To Heart Talks*, Volume One, page 53.

It is unclear how Twitchell finally heard of Kirpal Singh's comments about him. Nevertheless, by whichever means he heard (through tape, letter, or word of mouth), the fact remains that Twitchell was highly displeased. The reason why is obvious: if word got out that Paul had indeed been initiated by Kirpal Singh but was denying it, it would imply that the founder of Eckankar was lying; and a master who would lie (or deceive or cover-up) is to many spiritual seekers no master at all. Thus, in a strange but predictable maneuver, Twitchell sent a letter bombasting Kirpal Singh, denying that he was initiated by him, and threatening--totally without legal basis--a lawsuit if Kirpal Singh pressed the matter any further.

Around the time that Kirpal Singh received the portending letter from the founder of Eckankar, Paul Twitchell died unexpectedly from a heart attack. [15] It was a curious turn of events, for Twitchell departed only months after claiming that he would live at least another five years--if not fifteen.

[15] A copy of the letter that Paul Twitchell sent to Kirpal Singh shortly before his death is still in the possession of Gail Atkinson. According to several Ruhani Satsang initiates who were present in India when Twitchell's letter was received at Sawan Ashram, Kirpal Singh made the following comment: "We are all born with a large noose around our neck. He hasn't much rope left." Shortly thereafter Twitchell died.

Cover-Up: Second Phase

"Sri Darwin Gross, the Living Eck Master of Eckankar has stated that he knows for a fact that Paul Twitchell only had two Eck Masters during his earthly stay here; the Tibetan Rebazar Tarzs and Sudar Singh, and no one else. They were the only Masters to initiate Paul Twitchell."

--Bernadine Burlin, Personal Secretary to Darwin Gross [16]

"I have personally seen the name "Kirpal Singh" crossed out in the manuscript form of Letters to Gail. The name "Sudar Singh" was written above it. I believe that Gail did the editing."

--Former Editor of the ECK World News [17]

[16] Bernadine Burlin, op. cit.

[17] David Stewart, personal telephone interview with the author in 1977. I should add that David Stewart was under severe pressure not to talk with me or see me. I remember vividly when Brother Joseph Connell, President of Moreau High School, and myself went to Eckankar's international headquarters for a friendly chat with David Stewart. Mr. Stewart was very shaken and fearful when we met him at the headquarters; apparently he was frightened of losing his job and being the subject of harassment. I never saw David Stewart again. Weeks after talking with me, David Stewart "resigned" from his position and went back to Texas.

After Twitchell's demise, the cover-up concerning his involvement with Kirpal Singh continued unchecked. The posthumous publication of Twitchell's manuscripts were all thoroughly scanned. No work published after his death mentioned the name Kirpal Singh, even though the original manuscript, Letters to Gail, Volumes One and Two (a collection of letters written by Twitchell to his wife before their marriage in 1964), contained several references to the Ruhani Satsang master. For example, an excerpt from the original letter of May 30, 1963, reads: "Kirpal Singh used the readings from the Sikh Bible and a few from the Indian scriptures in his nightly meetings. . ." Yet, the revised letter replaces the name Kirpal Singh with "Sudar Singh" while leaving the main content of the letter intact. [18] It appears almost certain that the original Letters to Gail makes no reference to "Sudar Singh" whatsoever. Oddly, though, the present (revised) letters contain numerable references to him. It can be assumed that whenever the name "Sudar Singh" appears in Letters to Gail it is a cover name for Kirpal Singh, whose name appears in the original. [19]

In the 1970's, the International Headquarters of Eckankar vehemently denied that their founder was ever initiated by the late Kirpal Singh, or that Twitchell considered the Ruhani Satsang adept a Master. In pursuance of Eckankar's official stand on this issue, I sent a letter of inquiry to their headquarters in Menlo Park. Below are excerpts of what I received:

"Kirpal Singh and the Radha Swoami [sic] tried to "claim" Paul Twitchell and use him for their own purposes, as have other groups from the East and West. Paul

mentioned this several times and at one point wrote a letter to Kirpal Singh and his associates stating that he, Paul, would take Singh and his associates to court if necessary. Due to the threats and harassment and material Kirpal Singh and Mr. Khanna tried to use against Paul Twitchell by faking Paul's signature on many papers. Paul wrote that letter that his widow, Gail Twitchell, gave me permission to read. . . " [20]

[18] Refer to the appendices for more on this controversy of "name replacements."

[19] I owe this information to David Stewart, who served as both Editor of the Eck World News and consulting Editor for Illuminated Way Press. He personally worked on the editing of Letters to Gail, enabling him to see the original, untampered manuscript.

[20] Bernadine Burlin, op. cit.

It is obvious from the above extract that Eckankar strongly denies their founder's involvement with Ruhani Satsang. Their position, however, on Kirpal Singh's alleged forging of Twitchell's signature on "many papers" is without any documentary basis. Neither has Darwin Gross or Gail Atkinson (also initiated by Kirpal Singh) adequately explained why if Twitchell was never a follower of Kirpal Singh did he state both in articles and in letters that he was? A paradigm for the whole matter comes from one of Eckankar's first "proto-advertisements." In 1965, a few months prior to Eckankar's official inception, Twitchell distributed his "Bilocation Sheet." It reads:

PAUL TWITCHELL PRESENTS:

*New Concepts on the Ancient Teachings of Bilocation
Paul Twitchell, author, traveler, and lecturer gives a new
presentation of the ancient art of bilocation, out-of-body
experiences, in a series of public lectures. . .*

*He has studied under Swami Premananda, Self Realization
Order, Washington, and Kirpal Singh to name a few. [21]*

The full impact of Ruhani Satsang and its parent Radha Soami Satsang Beas on the teachings of Eckankar are not fully appreciated until one understands the connection between the writings of Julian P. Johnson and Paul Twitchell's. Without a thorough understanding of Twitchell's sources, Eckankar's origins will remain a mystery. The one person who had undoubtedly the greatest effect on Twitchell's own spiritual life was Kirpal Singh of India. But the one person who had the most pivotal influence on Twitchell's writings was a Kentuckian--Julian P. Johnson.

[21] I must thank Edward Pecan for this startling finding; he has been a key source for a number of rare and important documents.

LOST ANTECEDENTS

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Chapter Six

LOST ANTECEDENTS

Retracing the Roots of Eckankar

To retrace the teachings of Eckankar to their origin is, in some ways, to rediscover the actual religious influences upon Paul Twitchell's own life. For Eckankar, although it has its basis in many different religious traditions, is, in the final analysis, a "Paul Twitchell" creation. In creating his new movement, Twitchell drew extensively from his own personal experiences. He took grafts (each of varying degrees) from the many mystical and occult groups he had encountered, finally blending his knowledge of these traditions into what is now known as Eckankar - the ancient science of soul travel.

While several movements have had a major impact on Twitchell's development of Eckankar, three spiritual traditions were of primary importance: 1) Theosophy, as founded by Madame Blavatsky; 2) Self-Realization Fellowship, as presented by Swami Premananda; and 3) Dianetics and its religious outcome, Scientology.

But of all the religious movements to have an effect on Twitchell's development of Eckankar, no tradition had as much influence as the Sant mat tradition of North India. Twitchell first encountered the tradition through the auspices of Kirpal Singh, founder of Ruhani Satsang, a spiritual movement entirely based upon Sant mat.

For more on the Sant tradition, see *The Sants* edited by W.H. McLeod and Karine Schomer (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987).

By knowing of the definite parallels between Paul Twitchell's teachings and Kirpal Singh's, one can better understand the context out of which Eckankar was formed. A brief history of Ruhani Satsang and its antecedents will better enable us to realize the vast influence it and the Radha Soami Satsang Beas has had on the creation of Eckankar.

Radha Soami Satsang Beas

I have only given a gist on the history of the Radha Soami faith. For a more thorough study, at least genealogically, see my Master's Thesis, *Radhasoami Mat* (Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union, 1981).

Shiv Dayal Singh (more popularly known as "Soami Ji") was the first guru in the line of Radha Soami masters. He was a follower of Sant mat and had a close association with Tulsi Sahib of Hathras. Soami Ji was born in 1818 and died in 1878. After his death, several of his disciples worked as gurus.

The four main successors were Rai Saligram, who taught within Agra; Seth Partap Singh, who was the younger brother of Shiv Dayal Singh and was stationed at Soami Bagh; Gharib Das, a blind sadhu who settled in Delhi; and Jaimal Singh, who founded the Radha Soami Satsang at Beas in the Punjab.

One of the successors to Shiv Dayal Singh was Jaimal Singh. Baba Ji, as he was affectionately called, was initiated by Soami Ji in 1856 at the tender age of seventeen. He was a

celibate his whole life and was very much respected for his holy way of life. After serving as a master for over nineteen years, he passed on the mantlehip to his most devoted disciple, Sawan Singh.

Sawan Singh (known as the "Great Master") attracted an exceedingly large following to his teachings. He initiated over 125,000 people into Sant mat. He reigned as the master of the Radha Soami Satsang Beas colony in India for over forty-four years. A number of books were written during his tenure, the most important Punjabi work being Gurmat Sidhant (otherwise known as The Philosophy of the Masters). After Sawan Singh died, his mission was carried on by Jagat Singh (and later Charan Singh) in the Beas colony. Kirpal Singh, who also claimed succession, started his ministry, Ruhani Satsang, in Gur Mandi, Delhi.

Ruhani Satsang

The teachings of Ruhani Satsang are almost exactly the same as those taught by the Radha Soami Satsang Beas; the differences are slight.

Ruhani Satsang requests the keeping of a spiritual diary and does not advocate the practice of dhyān (contemplation) on the physical form of the guru during meditation. Radha Soami Satsang Beas does not suggest writing a spiritual diary, but does advocate the practice of dhyān

Kirpal Singh explains the essence of Ruhani Satsang:

"Ruhani Satsang is neither an intellectual nor scholastic system of philosophy, nor is it merely an ethical code of rigid moral virtues, though to a certain extent it partakes of both. . . Ruhani Satsang deals with the Science of the Soul or contact with the Inner Self in man. It teaches how the Self can be extricated from the clutches of the outer self. . . ."

[Kirpal Singh, Ruhani Satsang: Science of Spirituality (Delhi: Ruhani Satsang, 1970), page 1.]

According to Kirpal Singh, Ruhani Satsang is the science of connecting the individual soul with the "sound current" (also known as the shabd, nad, or "audible life stream"). This is done by a perfect adept. Vegetarianism plays a central role in the moral ethics of the group. All initiates of Kirpal Singh are pledged to a vow of vegetarianism, which includes abstaining from meat, fish and eggs. In addition to the strict diet, initiates are asked to abstain from alcohol and narcotics, and to give a minimum of two hours daily in meditation. Initiates are also asked to keep a regular diary in order to record their efforts on the path.

Kirpal Singh died in 1974. He was succeeded by his son, Darshan Singh, who has established his headquarters in Vijay Nagar, Delhi. Others have also claimed succession, including Thakar Singh and Ajaib Singh.

Three things are of elementary importance in the teachings of Kirpal Singh, as well as in Sant mat and Radha Soami:

1. *Satguru, both as the Absolute Lord (nirguna) and the living human master (saguna).*

2. *Shabd, which encompasses both varnatmak (that which is spoken or written) and dhunyatmak (inner spiritual sound--beyond expression), the primal current of the Supreme Lord (Sat Purush).*

3. *Satsang, externally the congregation of the earnest devotees of the truth, and internally the communion of the soul (surat) with the Satguru and Shabd .*

[Radhasoami Mat , op. cit.]

Julian P. Johnson

The greatest influence the Radha Soami faith, the parent of Ruhani Satsang, had on Paul Twitchell and Eckankar came in the form of a book entitled **The Path of the Masters**. The work was first published in France in 1939; its author was Julian P. Johnson.

Johnson, a native Kentuckian and distinguished surgeon, was initiated into Radha Soami on March 1, 1931.

[Julian P. Johnson, With a Great Master in India (Beas: Radha Soami Foundation, 1971).]

The next year Johnson left his medical practice in California and traveled to Beas, India, in order to serve his guru, Sawan Singh. From 1933 to 1939, Johnson devoted much of his time to writing about his master and his experiences in the Radha Soami path.

He first helped Sewa Singh in translating the Hindi book *Sar Bachan* (prose) into English. Later, he authored four of his own books on Radha Soami. Johnson's first work, **With a Great Master in India**, was a compilation of letters he had written to Americans about his first eighteen months in India studying under the master. His next two books, **Call of the East** and **The Unquenchable Flame** were semi-autobiographical accounts of himself and his future wife, Elizabeth Bruce. Yet, it was not until 1939 that Johnson's most famous work, **The Path of the Masters**, was published. The English book was the first its kind; it described in detail the history and practice of Santon-Ki-Shiska (Sant mat). The work was Johnson's magnum opus and today is considered a classic in oriental mysticism.

It should be noted that Johnson never saw the book in its final published form, as he died in 1939 shortly before it came out. A number of rumors have cropped up concerning Julian Johnson's death, and this may be a good place to clarify what actually happened. Apparently, Johnson got into a fairly heated debate with a younger friend of his named Paul [not Paul Twitchell] over health treatments. During the heat of the debate Johnson either tripped or was pushed and hit his head on a rock. He subsequently died from his injuries on the way to the hospital. Since there was some confusion over what actually transpired (Was it an accidental fall on Johnson's part? Or, was it an accidental fall caused by Paul who pushed Johnson to the ground?), there was naturally a lot of speculation (which led to gossip) about Johnson's death. Even today some uninformed observers claim Johnson was murdered. According to witnesses who were in India at the time, though, Johnson's death was a tragic accident and nothing more.

By 1955, the year Paul Twitchell received initiation from Kirpal Singh, several books had been published in English about Sant mat and Radha Soami. However, it was Johnson's climatic text, *The Path of the Masters* which remained the most popular explication. The book served as a beacon for attracting seekers to either Charan Singh of Radha Soami Satsang Beas (who was Jagat Singh's successor) or Kirpal Singh of Ruhani Satsang. Twitchell, indubitably, first came into contact with the work in the mid-1950's, if not earlier.

Although Twitchell does not cite *The Path of the Masters* by name or refer to Julian P. Johnson in his writings, he has, nevertheless, cited another key Radha Soami text - **Sar Bachan** - which was edited by Julian Johnson.

The overall influence that Johnson's books - The Path of the Masters and With a Great Master in India, in particular - had on Twitchell's own spiritual writings is truly remarkable. To actually document the effect would itself take several volumes, for Twitchell not only borrowed and learned from the book, he also copied it. . . word for word.

Spiritual Shoplifting

A Question of Plagiarism

The striking similarities between Twitchell's work and Julian Johnson's earlier writings are astounding. Three of Twitchell's books, The Tiger's Fang, Letters to Gail (both volumes), and Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad, appear to contain almost verbatim excerpts from Johnson's 1939 work, The Path of the Masters.

Yet, it is Twitchell's 1966 book, The Far Country, which raises the serious question of his originality. The work, amazingly, contains well over four-hundred paragraphs from Johnson's two books, The Path of the Masters and With a Great Master in India, without so much as a single reference note to them. It is likely that almost one-half of The Far Country is not of Twitchell's pen.

Realizing that it is incontrovertible that Twitchell was intimately acquainted with Johnson's books (even Eckankar's former President, Dr. Louis Bluth, admits that he loaned his Radha Soami books to Paul Twitchell), the real question that arises is, "Did Twitchell knowingly plagiarize from them?" Although there are two contrasting viewpoints on this question, the inevitable answer is: Yes, he did - unmistakably so. However, Eckankar strongly disclaims that their founder plagiarized from anybody. In a personal letter to the author, dated July 5, 1977, Eckankar's attorney, Alan H. Nichols, elaborates:

"With a wide background of study you will find many similarities both approximate and exact in many religious statements, history and mythology. Whether one is a student of Zoroaster, Mohammed, Buddha, Jesus, or Tao, many of the same things are said and (when translated) in the same way. . . How did you know Johnson didn't obtain his information from Twitchell or Rebazar Tarzs (sic) or some other common source? Don't be surprised that many people find the same truths and even in the same words, commandments, etc., whether they are concepts, stories of events, or levels of God Worlds or consciousness."

I should mention here that the purpose of Nichols' letter was to stop me from publishing my results on Paul Twitchell's nefarious past. Although I was only twenty-one at the time, I realized that Eckankar was hiding a devastating truth about the origins of their group and its founder. Naturally, I pursued my research with even my vigor after Nichols' letter, despite the fact that I might be sued for uncovering the hidden past of "Peddar Zasqk."

Nichols argues that when "truth" is given out from several different religious traditions, it comes out inevitably "both approximate and exact" to one another. However, the criterion of "truth" (be it in concepts or stories) is not the question involved here. The charge of plagiarism has not been raised against Twitchell for his use of similar ideas, teachings, or practices. Rather, the accusation of plagiarism has been raised because of the way Twitchell has chosen to describe that "truth."

Julian P. Johnson had his own unique style of writing, as can be easily noticed by reading his

books. Indeed, this very point has caused some criticism of him. Thus, when one notices the alarming coincidences between Johnson's and Twitchell's writings, it is not a question of "truth" being expressed but of style being copied.

Simply put, Twitchell was a plagiarist of the first degree. He had a proclivity for literary piracy; he took whatever he wanted from whatever books interested him. After long research in this area, it is clear to me that all of the Eckankar books authored by Paul Twitchell were lifted, to some degree or another, from other copyrighted texts. In fact, Twitchell stands out as one of the great religious plagiarists of the 20th century.

To better understand Twitchell's literary indebtedness to Johnson, consider the following facts:

1. Julian Johnson wrote all of his books on Radha Soami in India during the 1930's. Twitchell authored all of his works on Eckankar in America during the 1960's and the early 1970's .
2. Twitchell has stated in at least two published pieces that he considers Sar Bachan (Beas: Radha Soami Satsang, 1933) to be his "Bible." The book was edited by Julian P. Johnson in the early 1930's.

Perhaps Twitchell's most revealing plagiarism, and one that cuts at the very root of Eckankar's claim for legitimacy, occurs on pages 110 and 111 of his book *The Far Country*. For not only does Twitchell appropriate the words of Julian Johnson, as found on pages 32 and 33 of *The Path of the Masters*, but he also plagiarizes Johnson's quotation of Swami Vivekananda (given on the same pages) - forgetting in the process that two different people are speaking. The following is a comparison of Johnson's 1939 writing and Twitchell's 1966 writing:

Julian P. Johnson, THE PATH OF THE MASTERS [1939] *[Johnson is quoting Swami Vivekananda in the following passage; Johnson, by the way, properly references his quotation.]*

"Something behind this world of sense, world of eternal eating and drinking and talking nonsense, this world of false shadows and selfishness, there is that beyond all books, beyond all creeds, beyond the vanities of this world--and that is the realization of God within oneself. A man may believe in all the churches in the world; he may carry on his head all the sacred books ever written; he may baptize himself in all the rivers of earth--still if he has no perception of God, I would class him with the rankest atheist. And a man may have never entered a Church or a mosque, nor performed any ceremony; but if he realizes God within himself, and is thereby lifted above the vanities of the world, that man is a holy man, a saint, call him what you."

[The following passage is directly from Julian Johnson]

"First of all, it is not a feeling. Secondly it not a metaphysical speculation nor a logical syllogism. It is neither a conclusion based upon reasoning nor upon the evidence of books or persons. The basic idea is that God must become real to the individual, not a mental concept, but a living reality. And that can never be so until the individual sees Him. Personal sight and hearing are necessary before anything or anybody becomes real to us. . . ."

Paul Twitchell, THE FAR COUNTRY [1966]

"The Sugmad] is beyond this world of senses, this world of eternal eating and drinking and talking nonsense, this world of false shadows and selfishness. It is

beyond all books, beyond all creeds, beyond the vanities of the world. It is the realization of the Sugmad within oneself. . . A man may believe in all the churches in the world; he may carry in his head all the sacred books ever written; he may baptize himself in all the rivers of the earth--still if he has not perception of the Sugmad, I would class him with the rankest atheist. And a man may never enter a church or a mosque, nor perform any ceremony; but if he realizes the Sugmad within himself, and is thereby lifted above the vanities of the world, that man is a holy man, saint; call him what you will.

First of all, it is not a feeling. Secondly, it is not a metaphysical speculation, nor a logical syllogism. It is not a conclusion based upon reasoning, nor upon the evidence of books or persons. The basic idea is that the Sugmad must become real to the. . ."

The preceding comparisons reveal two things:

- 1) Paul Twitchell incorporated Julian Johnson's quotations (in this case, Swami Vivekananda's elucidation) without giving any reference note to him or the Swami. Instead, Twitchell claims that the Eck Master, Rebazar Tarzs, was speaking directly to him. And
- 2) on pages 110 and 111 of *The Far Country*, Twitchell not only exposes his outright plagiarism of *The Path of the Masters* but reveals that almost all of Rebazar Tarzs' dialogue is taken surreptitiously from Julian Johnson's writings. Naturally, the authenticity of Twitchell's account of Rebazar Tarzs is seriously damaged by such revelations.

Concerning the question of plagiarism, Woodrow Nichols sarcastically remarks:

"It doesn't take a Sherlock Holmes or even a Dr. Watson to see the resemblance between. . . The Path of the Masters by Julian P. Johnson and The Tiger's Fang by Paul Twitchell. . ."
[Nichols and Albrecht, op. cit.]

In the case of Eckankar, one might add that it is not an issue of a Sherlock Holmes undertaking the investigation, it is a problem of perception, and finally a question of whether or not that cognition is honest or deceptive. Lost Antecedents

NOTES

1. For more on the Sant tradition, see *The Sants* edited by W.H. McLeod and Karine Schomer (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987).
2. I have only given a gist on the history of the Radhasoami faith. For a more thorough study, at least genealogically, see my book, **The Radhasoami Tradition: A Critical History of Guru Successorship** (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992).
3. The six main successors were Rai Salig Ram, who taught within Agra; Seth Partap Singh, who was the younger brother of Shiv Dayal Singh and was stationed at Soami Bagh; Gharib Das, a blind sadhu who settled in Delhi; Jaimal Singh, who founded the Radha Soami Satsang at Beas in the Punjab; Sanmukh Das, who initiated sadhus in the path; and Radha Ji, Shiv Dayal Singh's wife, who initiated women in the path.
4. Ruhani Satsang requests keeping a spiritual diary and does not advocate the practice of dhyān (contemplation) on the physical form of the guru during meditation. Radha Soami Satsang Beas does not suggest writing a spiritual diary, but does advocate the practice of dhyān .
5. Kirpal Singh, *Ruhani Satsang: Science of Spirituality* (Delhi: Ruhani Satsang, 1970), page 1.

6. Kirpal Singh died in 1974. He was succeeded by his son, Darshan Singh, who established his headquarters in Vijay Nagar, Delhi. Darshan Singh died in May of 1989 and was succeeded by his eldest son, Rajinder Singh. Others have also claimed succession to Kirpal Singh, including Thakar Singh and Ajaib Singh.

[Sidebar: Although the succession of Kirpal Singh was a hotly contested affair, the succession of Darshan Singh was not.]

7. The Radhasoami Tradition , op. cit.

8. Julian P. Johnson, With a Great Master in India (Beas: Radha Soami Foundation, 1971).

9. It should be noted that Johnson never saw the book in its final published form, as he died in 1939 shortly before it came out. A number of rumors have cropped up concerning Julian Johnson's death, and this may be a good place to clarify what actually happened. Apparently, Johnson got into a fairly heated debate with a younger friend of his named Paul [not Paul Twitchell] over health treatments. During the heat of the debate Johnson either tripped or was pushed and hit his head on a rock. He subsequently died from his injuries on the way to the hospital. Since there was some confusion over what actually transpired (Was it an accidental fall on Johnson's part? Or, was it an accidental fall caused by Paul who pushed Johnson to the ground?), there was naturally a lot of speculation (which led to gossip) about Johnson's death. Even today some uninformed observers claim Johnson was murdered. According to witnesses who were in India at the time, though, Johnson's death was a tragic accident and nothing more.

10. Although Twitchell does not cite The Path of the Masters by name or refer to Julian P. Johnson in his writings, he has, nevertheless, cited another key Radha Soami text-- Sar Bachan --which was edited by Julian Johnson.

11. I should mention here that the purpose of Nichols' letter was to stop me from publishing my results on Paul Twitchell's nefarious past. Although I was only twenty-one at the time, I realized that Eckankar was hiding a devastating truth about the origins of their group and its founder. Naturally, I pursued my research with even more vigor after Nichols' letter, despite the fact that I might be sued for uncovering the hidden past of "Peddar Zasqk."

12. Nichols and Albrecht, op. cit. Twitchellian Choice

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Chapter Seven

TWITCHELLIAN CHOICE

The Selective Process

It can be argued that Eckankar is nothing more than the sum-total of Paul Twitchell's experiences; or, if not entirely his own "personal" observations, at least his own unique choice of differing spiritual and occult teachings. [1] Thus, the following study is designed to show how Eckankar is the result of an ongoing selective process, what I have termed the Twitchellian choice.

[1] Writes Paul Twitchell: "Eckankar, which I formed out of my own experience is the term used for the philosophy I have developed for the Cliff Hanger."

Cosmological Superstructures

Most of what Twitchell teaches (a.k.a. Eckankar) is garnered from Ruhani Satsang. The differences, however, between the two movements are not only distinctive but fundamental. The variances, which in part can be traced to Twitchell's inclusion of alternative spiritual concepts (from "Tone Scales" to "Golden Temples"), reveal some crucial points of departure for Eckankar from the ethical and practical foundation of Ruhani Satsang.

One significant change that Twitchell brought about in Eckankar was his restructuring of the traditional Sant mat "eight plane" cosmology. Twitchell did this, though, only after having used the original Sant mat cosmology in several of his earlier books--most notably in *The Tiger's Fang* and *The Far Country*. The intriguing aspect is that Twitchell's revised and copyrighted "twelve plane" cosmology (which is given in the *Spiritual Notebook* and was standard in Eckankar by 1971) contradicts his previous "eight plane" one. The following is a comparison chart of the two cosmologies:

Original (based upon the Sant tradition; depicted in Twitchell's first books on Eckankar):

1. *Sahasra dal Kanwal*; sounds - bell and conch
2. *Brahm Lok (Trikuti)*; sounds - big drum (thunder)
3. *Daswan Dwar*; sounds - violins (sarangi)
4. *Bhanwar Gupha*; sounds - flute
5. *Sach Khand*; sounds - vina (bagpipe)
6. *Alakh Lok**
7. *Agam Lok**
8. *Anami Lok (Sugmad)**

** Twitchell does not give the exact sounds of the higher regions above Sach Khand in this particular cosmology, nor does Sant mat, Radhasoami, or Ruhani Satsang.*

Revised (as given in the Spiritual Notebook and standard by 1970):

1. *Elam (Physical)*; sounds - thunder
2. *Sat Kanwal Anda (Astral)*; sounds - roar of the sea
3. *Maha-*

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4. *Brahmanda Brahm (Mental); sounds - running water*
5. *Sat Nam (Soul); sounds - single note of flute*
6. *Alakh Lok; sounds - heavy wind*
7. *Alaya Lok; sounds - deep humming*
8. *Hukikat Lok; sounds - thousand violins*
9. *Agam Lok; sounds - music of woodwinds*
10. *Anami Lok; sounds - whirlpool*
11. *Sugmad Lok; sounds - music of universe*
12. *Sugmad/Living Reality; sounds - music of God*

The most noticeable difference in the two cosmologies is in the location of the various sounds (known in Radhasoami as shabd dhuns). Note that in the first "eight plane" cosmology the sound of the flute is heard on the "fourth" plane (Bhanwar gupha), one region below Sach Khand (the eternal "soul" realm), whereas in the "twelve plane" chart, the sound of the flute is now heard on the "fifth" plane (Sat Nam; the "soul" region). This contradiction, while perhaps not noteworthy in any other spiritual tradition, is crucial in Shabd yoga, where the whole essence of the path is based upon the internal hearing of the "sound current" or "audible life stream." The knowledge of which sounds to listen to and which to discard is an extremely important part of the teachings. Other variances in the cosmologies include:

1. *The sound of the thunder which was heard in Trikuti (causal realm) in the original Sant mat cosmology is now according to the "twelve plane" chart heard in the physical region (Elam).*
2. *The tinkle of bells which was originally heard up to and through the first plane (Sahasra dal Kanwal) is now heard in the third region (MahaKal-Par-Brahm).*
3. *Par Brahm which used to be in Daswan Dwar (i.e., beyond mind and matter) is now in the causal realm--a region which was previously in Trikuti (the home of the mind).*

The preceding comparisons are important in understanding that, although Twitchell employed basic Sant mat concepts in the beginning of his group, the teachings themselves have undergone an evolution in Eckankar. This not only signals Twitchell breaking off from Ruhani Satsang doctrines but also indicates an evolving (and not a stationary) superstructure within Eckankar. More precisely, what may have been taught in Eckankar in 1965 and 1966 may not necessarily be disseminated in 1989.

Ethics: The Moral Edifice

The two principles that all Sant mat and Radhasoami groups agree upon are:

- 1) A pure moral life. This includes, among other things, a strict vegetarian diet (no meat, fish, or eggs) and an abstinence from narcotics and alcohol.
- 2) The teachings of Surat shabd yoga should be made available for free. That is, there are no charges for either initiations, instructions, or personal audiences with the Satguru. Also included under this guideline is the rule that a "perfect master" should earn his own living. The guru does not live off the donations made to him by his disciples. [2]

Paul Twitchell has taken portentous exceptions to the two most agreed upon principles in

Sant mat and Radhasoami. First and most glaring, Eckankar charges for their teachings. In fact, the group was originally incorporated as a business organization for this very reason. (It was only later that it switched its status to a "non-profit" religious movement.) Second, though he took a vow of vegetarianism in 1955, Twitchell and Eckankar advocate eating animal flesh. Argues Eckankar's founder:

"The vegetarian who is motivated by a religious creed takes his stand on the moral issue that eating flesh is against the principles of spirituality. Anyone who is a chela of ECKANKAR knows that after he has become efficient in Soul Travel and can go into the fifth (soul) plane, there is no right and no wrong, no beauty and no ugliness - only the one reality. Those who believe that vegetarianism is an asset to their spiritual growth are mistaken about the moral issue." [3]

Concerning meat-eating, Twitchell remarks:

"And one should eat plenty of meat, especially brains, kidney, and liver. These are generally good for the human system." [4]

[2] Julian P. Johnson, *The Path of the Masters* (Beas: Radhasoami Foundation, Ninth edition, 1974), page 227.

[3] Paul Twitchell, *Herbs: The Magic Healers* (San Diego: Illuminated Way Press, 1971), page 78.

[4] *Ibid.*, page 52.

Third and finally, Julian P. Johnson in his book, *The Path of the Masters*, lists several objective indices of a "perfect master." The very first guideline is that a master does not charge money for his services or live off the offerings of his devotees. Twitchell, interestingly, copies Johnson's list almost verbatim. However, the first objective indice Twitchell does not include. Below is a partial comparison:

Julian P. Johnson, The Path of the Masters (pages 227- 229):

2) Masters never boast of their mastership or of their spiritual powers or attainments. If any man claims to have attained the highest in spiritual development, that claim itself may be taken as conclusive proof that he has not attained so much.
(8) A real Master never performs miracles for public exhibition. He may do them on special occasions, and for particular reasons. But in every case, the thing is kept secret from the public. It is a fixed law with real saints that they will never do miracles to win disciples. Yogis often do miracles, healing the sick and other things, but real masters never do them except on very special occasions and (for) urgent reasons.

Paul Twitchell, Eckankar: The Key To Secret Worlds (pages 74-75):

The first thing about the Mahanta is that he never boasts of his spiritual powers or attainments. If any man claims to have attained the highest in spiritual development, that claim itself may be taken as conclusive proof that he has not attained much. No spiritual traveler ever performs miracles for public exhibitions. He might do them on special occasions, and for some particular reason, but in every case, the miracle is kept secret from the public. No traveler will go about doing miracles in order to gain followers. This is a fixed law in the universe. Some yogis often do miracles, healing the sick and other things, but a real spiritual traveler would never do them, except on special occasions and only for urgent reasons.

The first objective indice, which Twitchell does not in any of his publications cite or include, reads as follows from Julian P. Johnson's *The Path of the Masters*:

1. First and most noticeable of them all is the important fact that real Masters never charge for their services, nor do they accept payment in any form or any sort of material benefits for their instructions. This is a universal law among Masters, and yet it is an amazing fact that thousands of eager seekers in America and elsewhere, go on paying large sums of money for "spiritual instructions." Masters are always self sustaining. They are never supported by their students or by public charity.

Harold Klemp, the present living Eck Master, receives over two-thousand dollars per month as head of Eckankar. Twitchell, in his day, was reported to have earned a comparable amount. [5] To have a personal audience with the Eck Master can cost anywhere from \$100 to \$500. The seminars held around the world by Eckankar also charge admission fees. The preceding clearly indicates that although Eckankar has similarities with Sant mat and Ruhani Satsang, it is ultimately different.

[5] On Darwin Gross' and Gail Atkinson's divorce papers, their respective salaries are listed. Gross reported earning \$2,000 per month as head of Eckankar at that time. Later his salary went up to sixty-thousand plus a year. See Part Five, Eckankar in Turmoil.

Talk To God:

Prophecy, Sex, and Liberation

DEAR GURU: Things are so bad for this country that I must ask you to talk to God about the political future. I am asking as a loyal reader of Candid Press.
--Jan Baldheim

DEAR JAN: I didn't want to make any predictions on certain events, but you caught me on a technical point. I did promise to answer the questions of all Candid Press readers. I predict a bad year for my competitor, Jean Dixon, as she will have illness and financial loss. The war in Vietnam will increase until late in 1968 when the doves of both sides come to the negotiating table. In 1968, Johnson and Humphrey will run against Romney and Percy--and win again!.

I HAVE SPOKEN!

--Paul Twitchell

[In his featured column "Talk to God" for CANDID PRESS (December 10, 1967)]

Perhaps the most controversial document to surface about Paul Twitchell's hidden life is his featured column, "Talk to God," for Candid Press in 1967. In the column, Twitchell claims to speak directly with God about reader's personal and spiritual problems. The founder of Eckankar always ends his words of advice (which he states comes from God Himself) with the bold statement: I HAVE SPOKEN!

The article raises some serious questions about Twitchell's personal motives for founding Eckankar. For not only does Twitchell make erroneous prophecies (as in the preceding quotation, Johnson never did run for office in 1968 as Twitchell predicted, nor did his proposed running mate, Humphrey, win the race. Nixon, not Romney as Twitchell wrongly prophesied,

finally won the Presidential Election), but he also indulges in satirical sexual admonitions. A few graphic examples will best illustrate the latter:

DEAR MR. TWITCHELL: My penis is too long. Can you ask God to shorten it for me?
--BIG PETER

DEAR PETER: Why? That's what God said when He heard you wanted a smaller sex organ. God says that we can all be happy with what He gives unto us and you shall be happy to.
I HAVE SPOKEN!
--Paul Twitchell

DEAR GURU: I have the strange desire to wear lace panties. As I am a normal man in every other way, I want to know if God thinks this is bad?
--FRILLY FRED

DEAR FRILLY: He doesn't think it is good. We talked over your fetish - for that is what you have. We both feel that your fetish is due to lack of female companionship. You wish to secure a relationship with a woman whose initials are P.I. Do not ask how I know nor shall you question this advice which I now sayeth unto you: Call her and ask her for a date. She will accept. Do not wear your panties on the date. . . and you shall never again have a desire to wear panties. I HAVE SPOKEN!
--Paul Twitchell

DEAR LEARNED ONE: My penis is too small for a man of my age. Can you talk to God and make my penis grow?
--TINY MAN

DEAR TINY: God and I talked about your penis--and God has good news for you. He says that your penis is of average size and that you only believe it is too small for you failed to satisfy one woman when you were 19. Because it is of the proper size, there is no need for God to make it grow. I HAVE SPOKEN!
--Paul Twitchell

In the midst of Twitchell's incorrect prophecies and sexual innuendoes, he also talks about Rebazar Tarzs and Eckankar to his Candid Press readers. One can't help wondering, however, how serious Twitchell is in presenting his bilocation philosophy with such a humorous and mordacious context. Below are a few excerpts from the column on Eckankar:

DEAR ECK TEACHER: After learning bilocation, I sent my sole-being [sic] to Vietnam to visit my son who is stationed there-and he didn't recognize me. Why?
--MRS. HELEN AYNEZ

DEAR MRS.: I was with you that day and I wanted so to allow your son to see you--but I was hopeless to help you. You see, Eckankar is only able to function as a path to God--and as such, it is no good if learned for ulterior motives. You bought my book "Introduction to Eckankar" just so you could visit your son. As entering God's universe wasn't your goal, so the true power of Eckankar failed to work fully for you. I HAVE SPOKEN!
--Paul Twitchell

DEAR PAUL: I am only 16 and my problem may not be the type that you normally

talk to God about, but here goes. I am still a virgin! My three best friends aren't and they always tease me. I want to wait until I marry, but they keep kidding me. What should I do?

--M. OF MICHIGAN

DEAR M. OF MICHIGAN: If a problem worries a person, then it is important enough for me to talk to God about. First and most important is what Rebazar Tarzs once told me. He said: "Unto thine own self and not beyond." My teacher meant that you must do only what you feel is best for yourself and these are God's sentiments exactly. By the way, God wants you to know that your three friends are still virgins. They are merely trying to sound sophisticated and adult. I HAVE SPOKEN!

--Paul Twitchell

"Talk to God," probably more than any other piece of evidence, raises the question about the genuineness of Eckankar and about the authenticity of its founder. It is an issue which we will explore at length in the next chapter.

THE MANIFESTATION OF REBAZAR TARZS

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Chapter Eight

THE MANIFESTATION OF REBAZAR TARZS

Authenticity, Legitimacy, and Deception in the Study of Religion

Many followers within Eckankar today feel that the truth or underlying message of their founder, Paul Twitchell, is valid, regardless of whether or not his (or their) beliefs fit a historic and objective purview. To such Eckists, the inner core of the teachings relates a truth and a reality far superior to the shadowy contradiction it casts in a fact-oriented world. Thus, when accusations of plagiarism, cover-up, and fraud are labeled against their founder, devout members dismiss the allegations under the pretext that it has nothing to do with the real path, which is the ascension of the soul into the higher "God Worlds."

But is this truly the case? Can we separate the factual world from the inner spiritual realms? According to Ken Wilber, perhaps the premier transpersonal philosopher in the world today, the answer is no. Reality is not the exclusion of one conditional part from another (as we find in the extreme case of dualistic Zoroastrianism), but the very ground of being from which all conditions and events arise. In this light, the material world and the spiritual planes cannot be arbitrarily dissociated--rather they are inseparable and complementary.

Therefore, any comprehensive study of new religious groups like Eckankar, according to Wilber, must take into account two important factors: 1) legitimacy, the degree of integration that a particular religion offers. That is, how well does the group harmonize its follower with the teachings, the membership, and the society at large? And 2) authenticity, the determination of the religion's real goals. Is it aiming for just a better world? Or is it trying for the realization of higher planes of consciousness? Wilber, in **A Sociable God**, elaborates more on these two important elements:

Corollary: "Degree of legitimacy" refers to the relative degree of integration, meaning-value, good mana, ease of functioning, avoidance of taboo, and so forth within any given level. This is a horizontal scale; "more legitimate" means more integrative-meaningful within that level.

Corollary: "Degree of authenticity" refers to the relative degree of actual transformation delivered by a given religion (or world view). This is a vertical scale; "more authentic" means more capable of reaching a higher level (and not merely integrating the present level). [1]

[1] Ken Wilber, A Sociable God (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1983), pages 60-61.]

Wilber's methodology is important because it judges religious groups on both its spiritual aims and its worldly interactions. When we apply such a scale to Eckankar, we find that the group is essentially an illegitimate expression (because of its founder's denial of his real theopneusty) of an authentic religious aspiration, the attainment of higher levels of consciousness. It is most likely on account of Eckankar's lofty aims that it draws such an extensive following. However, what the group finally delivers is not the same as what it advertises. First, Eckankar is not a unique path unduplicated anywhere in the world, since, as we have previously noted, almost all of its teachings and practices are derived from pre-existing movements. And secondly, its

founder, Paul Twitchell, disqualifies his veridicality by copious lying, cover-ups, and plagiarism, but because he also cannot live up to his own self-made criterion for a true Eck Master. [2]

Thus, in Wilber's critical model, Eckankar is illegitimate simply because it cannot integrate its claim for a unique revelation within the objective-rational world without contradicting and ultimately invalidating itself. On the other hand, Eckankar's claim for authenticity is a more complex issue.

[2] Refer to SCP Journal: Eckankar--A Hard Look at a New Religion (Berkeley, September, 1979) for a comprehensive breakdown of Twitchell's inconsistencies in Appendix Number One.

The Manifestation of Rebazar Tarzs

Documented research indicates that Paul Twitchell created the character Rebazar Tarzs, basing the monk's life story on the biographies of Kabir, Shiv Dayal Singh, Sawan Singh, Kirpal Singh, and several other real life gurus. This finding, however, is known only to a few members in Eckankar. Others, not conscious of this fact (and who are allegedly adept at "soul travel"), claim to have extraordinary visions of the Tibetan, describing in detail his appearance and peculiar dress.

The preceding issue raises an important question with regard to Eckankar's claims for authenticity. Can a religion which is proven illegitimate still be authentic? More precisely, can Eckankar, though it is founded upon fraudulent lines, nevertheless, deliver genuine spiritual experiences? Surprisingly, the answer is both yes and no.

Yes, because it is theoretically conceivable that an earnest devotee may have an authentic experience of a fabricated mystic in higher planes of consciousness beyond the waking state. [3] However, it is important to remember that the authenticity of such an encounter has nothing to do with the image-content as such. Rather, it is the structure of consciousness itself which gives numinous power to the experience. Whether or not a guru is a literary invention or a historical personage matters very little in terms of authenticity. (It does have an important role, though, in determining the ultimate legitimacy of the encounter.) [4] Near-Death experiences, which are replete with culturally bound visions, indicates that the content of one's experiences may be unconscious projections (Christians see Jesus, not Buddha; Sikhs see Guru Nanak, not Mohammed; and so on), whereas the context or field of such transpersonal interplay is superconscious and not due to cultural restrictions.

Therefore, an Eckankar member may achieve a higher state of consciousness and behold a vision of what he/she believes to be Rebazar Tarzs. But it is not the Tibetan monk who is bestowing the elevated experience; rather, it is the devotee's own inherent capability for advanced structural adaptation (manifested, for example, in N.D.E.'s) which allows for such mystical heights. Hence, the important point concerning the authenticity of religious visions, as Wilber clearly points out, is not one of content (structurally speaking, it matters little if one beholds the Virgin Mary, Buddha, Krishna, or Fubbi Quantz), but of context. [5]

[3] For more on this issue, see "The Hierarchical Structure of Religious Visions," Journal of Transpersonal Psychology (Volume 15, Number 1); "The Himalayan Connection: U.F.O.'s and the Chandian Effect," Journal of Humanistic Psychology (Fall 1984); and The Unknowing Sage: The Life and Work of Baba Faqir Chand (forthcoming).

[4] Ken Wilber, A Sociable God, op. cit., pages 61-64.

[5] See "The Hierarchical Structure of Religious Visions."

No, since Eckankar is illegitimate it has an inborn tendency to validate its spiritual claims in less than truly authentic ways. For instance, many so-called religious visions reported by Eckankar members of Rebazar Tarzs are nothing more than vivid images which manifest quite normally while one is dreaming. Simply because an image is of a holy or revered personage does not qualify it automatically as a Divine manifestation. A distinction must be made between subconscious (pre/dream-like) and superconscious (trans/transcendent) manifestations. If this is not done - as is often the case in Eckankar where most dreams are elevated to spiritual experiences - a "pre/trans fallacy" occurs, resulting in the confusion of infantile image with genuine spiritual apparitions. [6]

The Future of Eckankar

Professor Mark Juergensmeyer in the foreword of this book postulates that Eckankar will survive my revelations about its history relatively unperturbed. Comments Juergensmeyer, "criticisms from outside can sometimes solidify a group and buttress its members' faith all the more, a paradox demonstrated in Leon Festinger's study of UFO cult, *When Prophecy Fails*." No doubt, there will be those within Eckankar who will become disenchanted and leave the fold (as has already been the case), but eventually the overall membership will stay generally the same.

Why is this the case? What is it that allows obviously fraudulent groups to survive? Rational humanists, such as Paul Kurtz, will argue that man has a predisposition towards gullibility, a will to believe for its own sake even if the belief turns out to be false or misconceived. More sympathetic scholars, on the other hand, like Mircea Eliade, point out that religious beliefs are derived from myths, which are sacred truths dealing with the reality of a group or sect of individuals. It is not an indagation, these scholars contend, to determine if there was actually an Adam or an Eve, or, in Eckankar's case, if Rebazar Tarzs really exists, because myths transcend scientists' quest for origins. Hence, in such academic circles, the driving and always reappearing question of "is it really true?" or "did it actually happen?" is side-stepped, parenthesized, or called the "fallacy of demystification." [7]

[6] Ken Wilber has written a superb article on the "pre/trans fallacy" in *Revision* (Volume 3, Number 2, 1980).

[7] Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religions* (New York: New American Library, 1974).

Both of the above viewpoints represent the opposite extremes currently popular in analyzing religious beliefs. The first perspective, as exemplified by Carl Sagan, Paul Kurtz, Issac Asimov, and others, depicts science's persistent materialistic (or, if generous, epiphenomenalistic) attitudes towards non-rational intuitions. The second purview, as propounded by the phenomenologist school, which includes Mircea Eliade and Robert S. Ellwood, Jr., reflects a basically empathetic and non-reductionistic stance towards spiritual phenomena. However, if we are left just to these two outlooks, we end up either reducing religion to its physiological-psychological roots (e.g., "God as vague birth memories of the obstetrician") or allowing for the inevitable, but thoroughly misleading conclusion that "all religions are the same." [8]

What is called for in the examination of new spiritual movements, like Eckankar, is not more 19th century materialism or indecisive phenomenological-hermeneutics, but a comprehensive and critical methodology, such as the one Wilber has outlined in *A Sociable God* and (with Dick Anthony and Bruce Ecker) in *Spiritual Choices* (1987). Only then can the claims of mysticism move out of the darkness of occultism and into the light of rational scrutiny.

In conclusion, since Eckankar has never really encouraged open and unbiased research into its founder's life and work, I don't envision any invitations for scholars to do so in the future. But if Eckankar remains in such a guarded position, then it will automatically castrate future researchers and objective seekers from its fold. In the end, a religion which does not open itself to logical inquiry cannot, with any form of reasoning, ask its followers to believe in its genuineness.

[8] Refer to Wilber's important criticism of hermeneutics in *A Sociable God*, op. cit., pages 12-16.

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UNDERSTANDING CULTS AND SPIRITUAL MOVEMENTS

Vol. 2, No. 2 and 3, 1987

Editor: David C. Lane

Published by Del Mar Press

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WHEN GOD GETS DETHRONED

by David Christopher Lane

The Downfall of Darwin Gross

When Darwin Gross appointed Harold Klemp as the "Living Eck Master" in 1981 he had no idea that two years later his successor would excommunicate him from Eckankar, ban his books from sale, and instigate a lawsuit against him for business impropriety and copyright infringement. But that is exactly what happened. In a "Personal and Confidential" letter dated January 4, 1984, Harold Klemp informed Darwin Gross of his removal from Eckankar:

Dear Darwin:

The Order of the Vairagi ECK Masters no longer recognizes you as an ECK Master. As the agent of the ECK, I have removed all of your initiations in ECK as well as terminated your membership in ECKANKAR. You are not capable or authorized to act or speak for or about the Vairagi ECK Masters, ECKANKAR or the ECK teachings, nor are you to hold yourself out as an ECK Master or ECK member. Do not directly or indirectly associate yourself or your activities with the sacred teachings of ECK or ECKANKAR in any way.

I have refrained from coming forth with this pronouncement sooner for the sake of those new to the path and still setting their spiritual foundation. Dap Ren [spiritual name for Darwin Gross] served the ECK well at one time but the negative forces were allowed in through lack of vigilance and discipline, causing spiritual decay. No one has done this to you--you have brought this upon yourself. Will the meaning of this discipline come clear or will you remain like an actor lost in his role?

You have been given many opportunities to avoid this, but you have continued your unseeing actions, forsaking the good of the whole for the whimperings of the little self. Your misuse of a sacred trust; your self-serving mismanagement of ECKANKAR; your acts against the MAHANTA, the Living ECK Master, and against other initiates; your false statements; all of this misconduct is the result of a fall from grace. No one, including an Eck Master, is exempt from the laws of Spirit.

And so it stands. The Divine plan continues unfolding while the ages roll by and Souls make their way home to SUGMAD. IT will receive you through the MAHANTA, the living ECK Master, when you are ready.

Sincerely,

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Sri Harold Klemp [The MAHANTA, The Living ECK Master]

Naturally, Darwin Gross did not accept Klemp's excommunication, since it was Gross himself who appointed Klemp as the Living Eck Master. In a letter, dated February 1984, and widely distributed amongst interested Eck chelas, Darwin Gross presented his own version of the breach between Klemp and himself.

Dear One:

Many individuals who are spiritually awake are concerned about the misguided information coming out of Menlo Park. The Vairagi Masters do recognize me as a Vairagi Master. My initiations cannot be removed by Harold or anyone else. Harold Klemp does not have that authority. He was given a spiritual responsibility, which he has lost. He no longer holds the Rod of Eck Power.

It is my duty and responsibility as a Vairagi Master to inform you that there have been many severe charges and false accusations made against me by ECKANKAR, the Corporation, Harold Klemp and others, at the World Wide of Eck, 1983, and on the tape of the 1983 World Higher Initiates Meeting. I was removed from the World Wide program, for it would have upset their plans. The schism that has come out of ECKANKAR was started by the ECKANKAR board, for I did not start this rift in ECKANKAR.

ECKANKAR has initiated legal action against me, dated August 20, 1983, and I was forced to go out and find a lawyer in Portland. This is not the way of honorable and ethical human beings. . .

People have been listening to misguided Higher Initiates who have been told by Menlo Park to remove my pictures, destroy my writings, tapes and music, and this has not been authorized by me; it is under the control and guise of someone working in the psychic world. Neither Paul Twitchell nor I have planned any of This psychic negativism that has been coming out (of) Menlo Park. It smacks of control and fear. What has been happening is taking away the individual's freedom of choice. Those individuals who have been reporting psychic attacks and concern about magicians need to ask Divine Spirit or SUGMAD, where is the spiritual protection that Eckist has? Have they been receiving spiritual protection from Harold Klemp? It does not appear so. . .

These excerpts (sic) from letters come from Eckists around the world:

Very quietly, this was what was spoken from the Eck. "Harold has been removed." I asked by whom? "Yaubl Sacabi." Who is the replacement, I asked? "Darwin Gross." [January 12, 1984]

With love and blessing in Spirit,

Sri Darwin Gross

What Went Wrong?

Darwin Gross' troubles didn't first begin in 1983; they started twelve years earlier when he was appointed by Gail (Atkinson) Twitchell to succeed her late husband, Paul Twitchell, as head of Eckankar in 1971; because, regardless of Eckankar's myths to the contrary, there is no historical basis for the "Vairagi Order of Masters." The concept is a literary fiction invented by Paul . Twitchell to invoke a double sense of mystery and antiquity. Succession in Eckankar is not made on some inner, subtle plane by a congregation of highly evolved mystics with comical sounding names like Fubbi Quantz, Rebazar Tarzs, and Yaubl Sacabi, but is rather the outcome of a very human process, replete with all of the trappings that such human enterprises entail. Simply put, Paul Twitchell as an ascended master did not appoint Darwin Gross; Twitchell's wife Gail did, who (interpret as you want) married the "new" master, Darwin, shortly thereafter. Likewise, Harold Klemp was not ordained by the Vairagi Order on some illustrious night in October, he was chosen by Darwin Gross, who for a variety of reasons (including the fact that he had bad back problems and that he could "control" Klemp), did not want to continue as the "Living Eck Master."

Thus, Darwin's first problem was that he was not an enlightened being in an authentic religious tradition. Instead, he was a two-year chela in Eckankar who "made good" by being in the right place at the right time. Gross never lived up to the expectations that sincere followers of Eckankar had for him. Given his real status (as that of an ordinary student in an extraordinary, titled position), Darwin attempted to "pose" as a fully realized master. But he could never succeed in his charade because he lacked the necessary intellectual and managerial skills to pull it off. In other words, Darwin Gross got "caught" in his own web of deception. Ironically, it was Gross' hand-picked successor, Harold Klemp, who prompted his final undoing.

According to court documents filed in the United States District Court for the District of Oregon by Eckankar's attorneys ESLER & SCHNEIDER, Darwin Gross breached his contract as President of Eckankar (and his lifetime employment agreement which gave him \$65,000 a year for the rest of his life) by the following "material" respects:

[CLAIMS MADE BY ECKANKAR AGAINST DARWIN GROSS]

- A. Diverting corporate opportunities to his own private benefit and profit;
- B. Using corporate assets for his own private benefit without any legitimate or reasonable benefit to defendant [Eckankar] or its corporate purposes;
- C. Regularly and habitually failing to perform his duties as an officer of defendant [Eckankar];
- D. Failing to live up to the high moral image expected of an officer and Trustee of a religious corporation;
- E. Failing to support and assist the Living ECK Master [Harold Klemp] in spreading the message of ECKANKAR;

F. Failing to show reasonable respect and courtesy to the Living ECK Master [Harold Klemp].

G. Converting and attempting to convert property of ECKANKAR to plaintiff's [Darwin Gross'] advantage;

H. Transferring and attempting to transfer property of and rights outside the direct control of defendant in contravention of the direct instructions of the Living ECK Master and defendant's Board of Trustees;

I. Teaching and spreading doctrines which, in the opinion of the Living ECK Master, are not consistent with the teachings of ECKANKAR;

J. Failing to retire when requested to do so; and

K. Failing to retire from public activities upon his termination as defendant's president and when requested to do so by the Living ECK Master.

Yet, Gross' followers do not see any impropriety in their teacher's actions. Rather, they see him in a dual function where his spiritual power is not stripped or questioned by his human wants and desires. Most of Darwin's work, these chelas contend, is done on the inner planes in his "other," higher spiritual bodies. What Darwin presents on the outer is not what he is on the inner. Perhaps Bob Brant summarizes this position best in his brief article, "Travels With Darwin," which was published in the first issue of Focus, Darwin's bi-monthly newsletter published by Sounds of Soul.

Travels With Darwin [Excerpts by Bob Brant]

A spiritual giant can look very much like you or me, walk the earth in normal clothes and be hard to pick out of a crowd, except for his eyes and a presence that you feel. Why can I say this? Because I've had the opportunity to travel around the world with a spiritual giant, Sri Darwin Gross, a Vairagi Adept Master....

It is a real honor and privilege to be closely associated with a Vairagi Adept Master in the physical. All your preconceived notions and images about Masters are shattered daily as Darwin demonstrates the true meaning of his three "L's"--Love, Life and Laughter; [He] truly lives the principles, and teaches us by his own example. My own personal preconditioning was shattered several years ago when I first sat down to a meal with him, and thought, "My God, he's eating." I didn't know Masters did such things. The image was completely demolished as I watched him consume a chocolate crepe.

But in the physical body he puts his pants on like the rest of us and never holds himself above anyone. He recently commented to someone, to set the record straight regarding rumors they had heard regarding Darwin being into drugs, alcohol, and

sex: "I have taken prescription drugs that are prescribed by the doctor, due to various operations I've had. Alcohol? I've had a sip of schnaps now and then. Sex? Yes, I love it. Sex has nothing to do with one's spiritual unfoldment. It is a form of communication between lovers and for reproduction."

How can Gross' exodus be properly explained without usurping the very foundation of Eckankar's belief system? How can a Living Eck Master, who allegedly has access to the very highest plane of Consciousness, get thrown out of Eckankar and not even be considered an initiate? Or, more bluntly, how can "God" be dethroned?

The forthcoming answers for Klemp and the higher initiates of Eckankar are not easy ones. For at the very least Darwin's removal indicates that Klemp himself can "fall" from grace at any moment. The "Rod of Power" is not infallible. Hence, for the average Eck initiate the prospects are a bit gloomy: if the Highest Master of God Consciousness can blow it and become a person non grata, then what does that say about his/her chances? Darwin's excommunication points to a fatal flaw in Eckankar's philosophy: spiritual realization is not moral salvation. Indeed, given Darwin Gross' behavior it appears obvious that attaining "Eck Mastership" does not in any way prevent one from still being immoral and self-serving.

DARWIN GROSS' LIFETIME CONTRACT by David Christopher Lane

One of the major disputes between Eckankar and Darwin Gross was over the latter's lifetime contract. Before Darwin Gross resigned as "Living Eck Master" in 1981 he signed an agreement with Eckankar which would pay him \$65,000 for the rest of his life, plus other perks such as use of a company automobile (and insurance), complete medical and dental coverage, entertainment expenses, and other assorted business expenses. Unquestionably, the contract is a lucrative one which is both beneficial to Gross before and after retirement. In August of 1983, however, Gross' contract with Eckankar was terminated. Today, Darwin Gross has no official connection with the movement he once led for ten years. Below are pertinent excerpts from the October 1981 Employment agreement.

Employment Agreement

Agreement made this 1st day of October 1981 between ECKANKAR, a non-profit corporation. . . (hereinafter referred to as "the employer") and DARWIN GROSS (hereinafter referred to as "the employee").

1. TERM OF EMPLOYMENT. The employer hereby employs the employee and the employee hereby accepts employment with the employer for a period beginning July 1, 1981 and terminating on the resignation of employee. . .

2. DUTIES OF EMPLOYEE. The employee shall serve as President of the employer. He shall do and perform all services, acts or things necessary or advisable to manage and conduct the business of the employer, subject always to the policies set

by the Board of Directors and act as chief executive officer.

3. COMPENSATION OF EMPLOYEE. 3.01 Salary: As compensation for services hereunder, the employee shall receive salary at the rate of 65,000.00 per annum, payable in semimonthly installments, or in such other installments as may be generally applicable to employer's business during the employment. 3.02 Deferred Compensation: If the employee remains in the employ of the employer until age 65, or on his earlier retirement at the option of the employee, the employee shall be entitled to receive from the employer the sum of \$65,000.00 a month (sic) pay able on the first day of each month commencing with the first full month after he attains such age or reaches earlier retirement and continuing for the remainder of his life. 3.03 Salary continuance during disability: If the employee becomes disabled during the employment term because of sickness or mental disability or for any other reason so that he is unable to perform his duties hereunder, the employer agrees to continue the employee's salary during such disability for the life of the employee.

4. EMPLOYEE BENEFITS. 4.01 Use of automobile. . . coverage (including the employee in the minimum amounts of \$2,000,000.00 for bodily injury or death to one person in one accident and \$50,000.00 for property damage in one accident. 4.02 Medical and dental coverage.

5. BUSINESS EXPENSE. Entertainment expenses: The services required by the employer will require the employee to incur entertainment expenses on behalf of the employer and the employer hereby agrees to make available to the employee for this purpose the sum of \$2,400.00 per annum payable in such amounts and at such times as the employee shall request.

End Quote. From "Understanding Cults and Spiritual Movements," Vol 2, 1987

[THE SAGA OF HAROLD KLEMP](#)

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Chapter Ten

THE SAGA OF HAROLD KLEMP

How To Dismantle Eckankar Gracefully

Here's the scenario: you are a devoted and longstanding member of a new religious movement. After slowly moving up the ranks, you secure a good position in the religion's publishing division. After 10 years in the group, you write a well-received book about your great experiences following the Spiritual Masters. Then, in a surprising turn of events, word comes that you have been appointed to be the leader of the group. You now find yourself the object of devotion among thousands of disciples. But there's a catch: after assuming the mastership you discover that the founder of your religion and his successor were corrupt; not only did the originator plagiarize and cover-up his past, but his successor misappropriated funds and led an immoral life-style. Now for the key question: if this was your situation, what would you do?

Unbelievable as it may seem in fiction, the above scenario actually did happen in real life to Sri Harold Klemm, the third "Living Eck Master".

I realize that devoted Eckankar members would argue that there have been over 970 Eck Masters prior to Gross and Klemm, but it should be remembered that Paul Twitchell invented the number in order to impress his following that his newly founded religion was really ancient. The bottom line is that there is no galaxy of Eck Masters who hang out in obscure corners of the planet earth waiting for spiritually advanced Eck chelas. Besides being one of the truly great plagiarists of the 20th century, Twitchell was also one of the century's great fibbers or yarn tellers. The only problem is that his numerous devotees don't know when to separate fact from fiction, genuine spiritual masters (like Kabir) from comic book Eck characters (like Fubbi Quantz), and authentic teachings (like listening to the inner sound current) from adolescent imagination (like "Temples of Golden Wisdom").

In a bold move (but not a politically wise one), Klemm excommunicated Darwin Gross from the Eck fold, even rescinding his lower level initiations. Klemm also tried to clarify Eckankar's dubious past by revising much of its "official" history. In a series of articles in The Mystic World and his public talks, Klemm admitted that Eckankar's founder, Paul Twitchell, was a follower of Swami Premananda, Kirpal Singh and L. Ron Hubbard. Prior to Klemm's announcements, the official word through Eckankar was that Twitchell was not involved with these teachers. In an article for the Mystic World entitled *Stop The World I Want To Get Off. . .Or When Will You Leave ECK?* Harold Klemm wrote the following about his mentor, Paul Twitchell:

"Here comes Paul Twitchell, a social rebel and spiritual giant in a single package. His personal life and habits were a jolt to people who thought a man of God should be of another order. . ."

"Scientists pelted Paul with letters. The advanced members, the "Clears," made an offer to advance him in spiritual matters for a large sum of money. Paul bought none of their sales pitch because they had more problems than he did, an outsider."

Klemm's allegation that Twitchell was an "outsider" to Scientology is patently incorrect. Twitchell was a

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later broke off his connection.

"Although he claimed to have acted as Ron Hubbard's press officer for several years in the District of Columbia, he wanted no "gas" from these professional people. Paul's tie-in with Scientology during his training as Godman is another bitter mouthful to chew for some people."

"Even in ECK, one's cherished notions about the Master are dashed to the ground by the truth of spiritual things. For instance, all ECK Masters do not hold the same high power from the SUGMAD when they take the Rod of ECK Power."

[The Mystic World (Winter 1984), pages 1-2]

Klemp even went so far as to admit that Twitchell's writings appeared similar to Julian P. Johnson's, the author of the now famous *The Path Of The Masters*, and other religious writers. Yet, Klemp did not go far enough. Instead of honestly telling the truth to the Eckankar membership that Twitchell was a notorious plagiarist and a first rate liar, he recoiled and sought to give a ludicrous explanation about how there is an akashic library in the astral plane where writers, like Johnson and Twitchell, go to copy their books. In other words, Twitchell didn't plagiarize *The Path Of The Masters* in its copyrighted form, he simply copied it word for word from the original, "astral" version of the text. Klemp implies also that Johnson copied his writings from the same text too.

With such a convoluted use of logic, it should then follow that anybody could copy from Eckankar copyrighted materials and not get in trouble for doing so. But such has never been the case. Even Darwin Gross, the former leader of Eckankar, was not exempt from allegations of copyright infringement when he used the terms "Eck" and "Ek" to describe his ministry. Simply put, Klemp has invented a story to cover-up Twitchell's plagiarism so that Eckankar can still get away with publishing "stolen" materials. If Twitchell's plagiarism was ever examined in a court of law, Eckankar would have to forfeit thousands of dollars and every book its founder wrote. There is not one Eckankar book by Paul Twitchell which does not contain lifted material from other authors.

Harold Klemp also suffers under the delusion that even though Eckankar is fraudulently based (from start to finish) that he can somehow keep the "integrity" of the movement intact. How can this be possible when Twitchell's own wife (and, I would suggest, co-founder), Gail, has privately admitted that Eckankar is a "fraud"? How can this be viable when the history of Eckankar's

[See "Gakko Came From Venus," UCSM (Volume 2, Number 1).]

origins is a fanciful, literary (and, at times, borrowed) fiction? The forthcoming answers are a sad indication of the state of some modern religions: money, blind faith, power, and ignorance. For if Harold Klemp was truly honest and sincere, he could only do one thing to Eckankar: dismantle it gracefully, but quickly .

However, misguided Eckists need not fear, for Klemp has directed Eckankar into a new direction, one which has paranoia as a cornerstone. I don't think it is coincidental that the number of Eckists who have had "bad" astral experiences has increased steadily since Harold Klemp published his article, *Methods of the Black Magician*, in the Winter 1983 issue of *The Mystic World*. In 1987 alone I have talked with more than ten Eckists who have reported terrifying experiences of "losing" one's mind and mental balance; some even claim to be haunted by internal beings and powers taking away the inner recesses of their personality. A close look at the following passages from Klemp's article shows clearly where these Eckists are getting

their fears:

"The black magician depends upon simple, inexperienced people to provoke worship of the personality, for in ignorance is his power. Signs of one in whom the Kal power is stronger than the ECK are several, including: 1) Show him money and he wonders how to get it from you, 2) make peace in your household and he will try to break it up and 3) if you say, "This is Truth," he tries to prove it is not so.

"The potential for a fall from grace is a real danger when the lust for power thrusts itself into the foreground. No matter what high station anyone gets in his journey to God, he can end up a fallen star unless he has truly seen the SUGMAD. . .

"A black magician has a degree of knowledge as to how invisible energies split from the Audible Life Current, but he bends them toward darkness and destruction. With power to invade dreams, he can bring terror through nightmares. The dreamer quakes, wondering what has suddenly unbalanced the delicate scale in his affairs. Monsters appear, forces, tear at the Astral body and strange, awful phenomena confront him.

"Fear grows and, with it, the disarming influence of the magician steals over the victim. In the initial phase he scatters the initiate's serenity so as to control the mind. Craving raw power, the magician cares not a wit for Soul's freedom. . .

"To survive a psychic attack takes several approaches: 1) A conscious closing of the emotional door against the intruder. Any photos, as well memorabilia, of a disruptive personality must be put out of the house. 2) A constant chanting of HU or the initiate's personal word. 3) An actual fight on the inner planes whereby the trespasser is driven off by marital arts or some weapon at hand. 4) Getting plenty of rest each night. . .

"People under psychic attack must make a decision whether to follow the Lord of Light and sound, or the lord of darkness. Hesitation creates a split current of energy within one. I've had reports of people who suffered heart attacks because they let their emotions pull in two different directions at the same time. Forego the Worship of Moloch. The price is too dear. I can help you combat the dark force by use of the might Sword of the SUGMAD--but only if you listen."

The Mystic World (Winter 1983), pages 1-2

The danger of Klemp's warning against "black magicians" (some former Eckists feel it is a thinly disguised criticism of Darwin Gross) is that it allows for impressionable Eckists to start having the very experiences he warns against. Indeed, several of the Eckists I interviewed did not have troubles in their meditation until Klemp's warnings of the "black magician [who] creeps into his prey's life step by step. Every emotional trick is used to bind the two ever more closely together." Such mind games can only run havoc on immature and impregnable personalities. In this way, Harold Klemp has done a great harm to his following. Eckankar has been the source of tremendous mental imbalance for a growing number of devotees because its doctrines are not systematic, psychologically sound, and spiritually authentic. Rather, they are the outcome of Twitchell's schizophrenic plagiarism (he copied widely varying and contradictory teachings), which are replete with unsound (and unproven) meditation techniques, sophomoric advice about "internal beings," and dangerous spiritual counseling. The net result is that Eckankar is anything but a beneficial and uplifting religion.

Harold Klemp would do a service to himself and the spiritual community at large if he would simply resign from his post and tell the unvarnished truth to Eckankar followers. If this was done, thousands of Eckists may then have the opportunity to search again for an authentic path, instead of being misled by a religious corporation riddled with inept leadership and corrupt politics.

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From THE MAKING OF A SPIRITUAL MOVEMENT: THE UNTOLD STORY OF PAUL TWITCHELL AND ECKANKAR

Appendix One

THE NEW PANTHS

SHABDISM IN NORTH AMERICA

There are now several popular religious movements in North America which owe their existence, either partially or wholly, to the **Radhasoami** tradition of India. The spectrum ranges from immediate connections, as in Eckankar and the Divine Light Mission whose founders have taken initiation from one of the Satgurus, to associative influences where sects have borrowed (and, in some cases, plagiarized) writings and spiritual lineages from Radhasoami.

All of these new panths, though, have one thing in common: they give significant emphasis to the Shabd, the transcendent power which is believed to be the creative and sustaining force of the universe (it is also known as the **Audible Life Stream** or the "Music of the Spheres"). And though there are groups which speak of this **Sound Current** which are both anterior and exterior to the Radhasoami tradition, all of the new movements under discussion have based their knowledge and writings on Radhasoami's own particular interpretation of **Surat Shabd Yoga**, the practice of uniting the soul with the internal sound energy.

In this article, I will describe the relationship of these American religious movements to the Radhasoami tradition and then will examine the reasons why there is such a strong tendency in these new panths to deny their living religious heritage.

The Radhsoami Tradition of India

The name Radhasoami has been generally applied to those gurus and gaddis (the seat/residence of a saint, living or deceased) who trace their spiritual lineages back to Shiv Dayal Singh (1818-1878), the proclaimed founder of the movement who resided in the city of Agra, in the Uttar Pradesh District of India. "Soamiji Maharaj," as Shiv Dayal Singh was called by his disciples, came from a family of Nanak-panthis and was primarily influenced in his religious upbringing by the nirguna bhakti poetry of such Sants as Kabir, Nanak, Paltu, and most significantly Tulsī Sahib of Hathras.

What distinguishes Soamiji's teachings (and subsequently those of the Radhasoami tradition) from Vaishnavism, Tantrism, Goraknathism, Saivism, and other forms of Indic piety is essentially the emphasis he gives to three cardinal precepts:

- 1. Satguru, both as the Absolute Lord (nirguna) and the living human master (saguna).
- 2. Shabd, which encompasses both *vanastambh* (vocal or written) and *dhyanastambh* (transcendent melody) elements.

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- 3. Satsang, the congregation of earnest devotees of the truth.

Upon Soamiji's death, several of his disciples served as gurus, resulting in a proliferation of satsangs. Today there are at least thirty different Radhasoami centers in India with direct lineage connections to Shiv Dayal Singh. For the purposes of this paper, however, we will only be concerned with two of the largest and most influential of these: Radhasoami Satsang Beas and Ruhani Satsang. For it is these two sects which have been instrumental in the development of a number of popular American religious movements.

Ruhani Satang and its parent Radhasoami Satsang Beas trace their lineages back to Shiv Dayal Singh through Jaimal Singh, Soamiji's only Sikh successor who eventually settled on the banks of the Beas river in the now thriving farm community of the Punjab. After Jaimal Singh's demise in 1903, his chief disciple and successor, Sawan Singh (1858-1948), founded a spiritual colony in honor of his guru. It was Sawan Singh who has been the most pivotal force in the spread of Shabd Yoga related panths in North America. His impact can be directly seen in the teachings and writings of the Divine Light Mission, Mishra's Yoga Society, Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind's metaphysical groups, and the Movement for Spiritual Inner Awareness (M.S.I.A.).

Although when Sawan Singh died, he was eventually succeeded (via Jagat Singh) by his grandson, Charan Singh, a number of his disciples founded their own movements. Eminent among these was Kirpal Singh who established Ruhani Satsang in Gur Mandi, Old Delhi. Kirpal's influence on popular Shabd Yoga groups in America is second only to Sawan Singh's. Both Walter Baptiste and Paul Twitchell (the late founder of Eckankar) were disciples of the Delhi master and have incorporated his teachings into their respective organizations.

In the following section, we will examine some of the more prominent panths in America which have an affiliation in one way or another with the Radhasoami tradition of India through the aegis of Sawan Singh or Kirpal Singh.

Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind

In the early part of this century, many Sikhs immigrated by way of Canada to the United States. Outstanding among these was Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind, who was both a spiritual teacher and an activist for Indian rights. He was involved in the famous 1923 court case "United States vs. Bhagat Singh Thind," wherein he attempted to escape restrictive racial causes by arguing that Indians are Caucasian.

During the twenties and thirties, Thind wrote a number of books and conducted classes throughout the country on metaphysics. Thind claimed at that time, as he did before his death in the late 1960's, that his spiritual inspiration came from the Sikh religion. According to Kirpal Singh, however, Thind was actually an initiate of Sawan Singh of Radhasoami Satsang Beas and derived his teachings from him without due reference. Instead of utilizing Sikh doctrines, Thind was allegedly borrowing Radhasoami precepts, and in so doing was covering up his real religious theopneusty. Comments Kirpal Singh:

"When I went to America there was one gentleman, he's passed away now, a Sikh gentleman who was giving talks on payment. His name was

Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind. He married a French lady. He was initiated by Baba Sawan Singh, I know, definitely. When he wrote his first book, Radiant Road (sic: Thind had written several books before 1939) he sent a copy to Baba Sawan Singh. He gave it to me. It was a copy of what I had written. I wanted to meet him but he always evaded me. I was in America four months, I asked him for his program but he would change his program. We never met. He said he never even saw Baba Sawan Singh, and never knew that Radiant Road , his book, is the exact translation of a portion of the book I had written."

Part of the reason Thind has been accused of plagiarism over his book, Radiant Road to Reality (1939), was not because he used similar concepts as found in Radhasoami but because of the style and form with which he conveyed his message. The confusion over which book he actually plagiarized from (Sar Bachan Radhasoami, Gurmat Sidhant, or With A Great Master in India) sidelights the real issue: Why would Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind wish to employ almost all of Radhasoami's specific parmarthi doctrines but deny their origin and his disputed association with the satsang? It is a question which we will examine at length in the last part of this article, for the denial of allegiance, as we shall see, is not an uncommon occurrence, especially with certain neo-gurus and movements.

Paul Twitchell and Eckankar

Perhaps the most controversial of the new panths associated with Radhasoami and Ruhani Satsang is Eckankar. Today the group, under the leadership of Harold Klemp (the present "Living Eck Master") and Darwin Gross (the previous Master) does not admit that their founder, Paul Twitchell (1908-1971), was initiated by Kirpal Singh in 1955, although there is overwhelming documentary evidence to support it. Rather they claim, as did Twitchell from about 1966 onwards, that their founder was initiated by Sudar Singh of Allahabad and Rebazar Tarzs, a Tibetan monk supposedly over five-hundred years old. Though these claims would usually go by undetected (from lack of primary materials), this book (1978, 1979, 1983, and 1988) and the SCP Journal: **Eckankar, A Hard Look At A New Religion** (1979) have proven beyond a reasonable doubt that Paul Twitchell was indeed a follower of Kirpal Singh, as well as Swami Premananda and L. Ron Hubbard.

Sudar Singh and Rebazar Tarzs, though their existence is factual to some extent as "cover names" for real gurus, are actually mythological characterizations of Twitchell's genuine and imagined biography. In order to start a "new" movement, Paul Twitchell attempted to cover up his previous association with Kirpal Singh (while continuing to use him and the books of Dr. Julian P. Johnson as his primary source) and tried to create a mythology which made him and his group, Eckankar, a fulcrum for a unique and superior spiritual revelation.

Today, the movement has somewhere between thirty and fifty-thousand paid members. Most "Eckists," as followers are usually called, have never even heard of Kirpal Singh, Ruhani Satsang, Radhasoami Beas or Dr. Julian P. Johnson. According to the materials published by the group, most members are informed that Eckankar is the fountainhead of all religions. Though its inception only traces back to 1965, the movement's living masters have taught that, if anything, Sant mat, Radhasoami, Shabd Yoga, and other forms of Indic spiritual discipline based upon

the "Sound Current," are offshoots from the ageless path of Eckankar. However, the hidden history behind Paul Twitchell's life and work has recently been coming more well-known to the reading public which will inevitably lead to a confrontation between what is "believed to be true" and what is "actually the case."

John-Roger Hinkins and M.S.I.A.

In 1968, John-Roger Hinkins, a Mormon and ex-high school teacher, started his spiritual ministry. He was associated with Paul Twitchell and Eckankar, having been a mail correspondent member, and, to Eckankar's records, a second initiate.

In several long, personal interviews with John-Roger at his house in Mandeville Canyon, I learned that he did not see his connection with Paul Twitchell as a master/disciple or teacher/student relationship. Be that as it may, the fact remains that his group and his teachings are almost exactly the same as Eckankar's, not even excepting particular Twitchellian nuances. It should also be noted that M.S.I.A.'s organizational structure is almost parallel to Eckankar's with regard to initiation, discourses, and cosmology.

John-Roger is known to members of M.S.I.A. as the physical manifestation of the Mystical Traveler Consciousness (a concept quite similar to the Satguru in the Radhasoami tradition and the Mahanta in Eckankar). According to Roger's account, the mantleship of the MTC was passed on to him in or around 1963. During this time, Roger claims to have met Sawan Singh, the late Radhasoami Satsang Beas master. "J.R.", as he is affectionately called, holds that the Great Master of Beas was the previous carrier of the Mystical Traveler Consciousness and passed on the "keys to the Kingdom" to him on the inner spiritual planes. However, "J.R." at that time did not recognize the luminous being as Sawan Singh. It was only later when he saw a photograph of the guru that he placed the picture of the Great Master with the powerful entity he encountered in meditation.

John-Roger's group has grown considerably in the last ten years, and now has centers throughout the United States and in several countries across the globe. M.S.I.A. publishes its own newspaper, *The Movement*, and runs several sister-organizations, the most visible of which is Insight Transformational Seminars.

Divine Light Mission

Of all the movements under discussion, the one that fewest people know has a connection to the Radhasoami tradition is the Divine Light Mission. As Juergensmeyer notes:

"It is reported that the "Divine Light Mission" of the boy guru, Shri Hans Maharaji, is derived from Radhasoami teachings and the Radhasoami community. According to some accounts, the father of the present boy guru had been a follower of one of the Radhasoami branches, but split off from them to start his own following."

With the emergence of Balyogeshwar (alias Guru Maharaji), the mission came to the attention of the general public in India and North America. The movement had its biggest impact in the early 1970's when it attracted thousands of devotees. The initial growth, however, has since subsided, and the group is currently enjoying a

relative stability, with neither a significant influx of new members or a substantial exodus.

The most striking parallel between the Divine Light Mission and the Radhasoami Tradition concerns their teachings on the "Divine Word," the inner-spiritual melody. Both groups employ meditational techniques for initiates to concentrate their attention on this current of "light and sound" which is believed to free the soul from its attachment with the physical body. Though both groups have similar theological teachings concerning the nature of this "Divine Word," each differ in their own way on how exactly to approach the Supreme Abode.

Walter Baptiste, Dr. Ramamurti Mishra, and Ray Stanford

There are a number of lesser-known individuals and groups which have had alliance with Radhasoami. Walter Baptiste, for instance, was initiated by Kirpal Singh in the mid-1950's. He now runs a yoga facility and a vegetarian restaurant in San Francisco, where his wife gives classes on Hatha Yoga. Baptiste also conducts spiritual counseling, and, I am informed, gives initiation using the same five holy names (panch nam) that all Radhasoami satsangs linked with Jaimal Singh (including Kirpal Singh's Ruhani Satsang) have given out as their meditation mantra.

Other people have been influenced by Radhasoami but in less dramatic ways. Dr. Ramamurti Mishra, the famous yoga teacher, was initiated by both Sawan Singh and Baba Somanath. But their impact should not be overestimated as Mishra has adopted many gurus. Nevertheless, he does teach Nada-yoga (union of the soul with the interior/primordial sound) and lays emphasis on much of the Radhasoami teachings.

Today there exists a multitude of organizations which reveal a striking compatibility with Radhasoami teachings concerning the "Sound Current." And though perhaps most of these movements have no direct link, they have somewhere along the line utilized practices or beliefs from the many Radhasoami publications. Groups in this category include: A.U.M. (Association for the Understanding of Man), whose founder, Ray Stanford, was initiated by Charan Singh of Radhasoami Satsang Beas; Morningland, which appears to have been influenced by some of Eckankar's distinctive doctrines; and Jerry Mulvin, former professional bowler and long time follower of Eckankar, who now claims to be an enlightened master and competent to "connect" disciples to the sound current (for a hundred dollars, no less!).

Genealogical Dissociation:

Emergence and Repression in the New Panths

An important question arises when one reviews the startling tendency inherent in many of the new panths and their founders to deny their religious heritage--a denial which has taken on the form of name-deletions, plagiarism, and cover-ups. Why?

Though there may indeed be many answers [like SCP's skepticism of Eckankar's late founder: "Twitchell was a one-eyed man who preferred his own fabrications to the truth"], it becomes quite apparent on closer inspection that there is one fundamental reason. Simply put, it is not that the new panths are in all instances concerned with suppressing their historical roots, but rather that they are overly anxious about their own distinctiveness as a new movement. It is primarily because of this emphasis on becoming established as a separate entity that the given group and its founder disconnect instead of integrate the past out of which they arose. This severance, which has its basis in developmental psychology, I have coined as "genealogical dissociation."

Ken Wilber, in his books, **The Atman Project** and **Up From Eden**, sees this predisposition towards disunion as an underlying psychological problem in man's development, both individually and socially. When attempting to differentiate from a particular state of awareness or stage of development, for instance, man has two options: either integrate the lower order where the emergence takes place or repress it. If it is integrated, then that stage remains conscious and pliable; if it is estranged or disconnected, however, then it turns unconscious and threatening. In terms of the mind/body dualism, Wilber explains it thus:

"The mind/body dissociation was a natural result of the increasing death-terror that emerged with the mental-egoic phase, around 600 B.C. As the mind began to emerge in a clear way for the first time in history, the ego, in flight from death, simply alienated, dissociated, or repressed the body. And it did this for a simple reason: the mental-ego is composed of ideas, and ideas seem permanent, unchanging and fixed, whereas the body, composed of mortal flesh, obviously dies. For example, all real trees grow, live and then die--but the word "tree", the symbol "tree", stays the same. So if ideas seem fixed and unchanging, whereas bodies are fleshy and mortal, and you're in flight from death, which of those two do you identify with? The minds, of course. You identify with words, symbols, concepts--the ego--and you deny, alienate, repress the mortal body. Ideas become the new immortality project, and the body becomes the new threat, the new enemy."

Applying Wilber's elucidation to the development of new panths (specifically Eckankar), we can see that it becomes a "fear" of losing that emergence--that step forward--which prompts suppression or attempted annihilation of the lower order where the differentiation first took place. In our case, historical-religious genealogical dissociation. This disunion in many of the new panths (e.g., like Paul Twitchell's denial of his association with Kirpal Singh and Ruhani Satsang), springs forward not so much out of ignorance but out of hope for a separate, distinct and lasting survival--an autonomous tradition. But as Freudian and Jungian theories about personality maturation demonstrate, the unconscious or shadow self cannot be disregarded because it is part of the entire organism. It, quite simply, must be dealt with.

Religiously, we can see the attempt for "integration" in the early history of Christianity, especially with the influence of St. Paul. There was an effort on behalf of the newly emerging Church to include (not obliterate) parts of the Judaic religion and culture. Thus, even today Roman Catholicism acknowledges its indebtedness to

the Jewish heritage. And so is the case with Radhasoami (particularly the Beas branch in the Punjab and Sawan-Kirpal Mission) towards Sant mat. There is both an acknowledged link and a proud remembrance in Radhasoami and Ruhani Satsang of its ancestry with the medieval nirguna bhakti poet-Sants.

In the context of some of the new panths, however, there is an endeavor to dislocate, dissociate, and even destroy their antecedents. Instead of an admission to their actual religious heritage, we instead find a denial of it--even in the very face of incredible contradictory evidence.

Take, as an illustrative example, the case of Paul Twitchell and Eckankar. When the group first started, Twitchell did not completely deny his association with his guru, Kirpal Singh. In fact, in many articles Twitchell wrote at length about his admiration for the Ruhani Satsang Master. However, from about 1966 onwards we find an accelerating cover-up. What prompted this shift of allegiance? The answer is perhaps simpler than we might expect: the growing popularity of Eckankar.

When Twitchell came to grasp the significance of his new religious movement--the fact that it could draw in thousands of followers-- he decided to subvert anything which would hinder Eckankar's progression and potential popularity amongst the masses. He wanted his group to be self-determining, marking its own future course as a viable spiritual tradition. And the most serious threat to this much desired autonomy, at least to Twitchell's purview, was his past. Hence, Twitchell invented a new mythology, one which intertwined fact, fiction, legend and imagination into a confused complex that exhibited only one truly consistent theme: the Living Eck Master (in this context, Paul Twitchell) as Hero.

Now the disturbing problem in all of this is that Eckankar's attempt for a neo-mythology is not based upon some prior authenticated historical tradition, but upon its founder's own creative impulses. Impulses which at times plagiarized whole chapters from copyrighted Radhasoami Satsang Beas texts, lied about biographical details, and commenced vast cover-ups concerning the origin of Eckankar's doctrines. However, it is not solely a repression of the past which prompted Paul Twitchell to deny his spiritual roots, but rather his heightened concern for the future, for the continuing growth of his new movement. It was this obsessive anxiety which outweighed--instead of integrated--Twitchell's authenticity to his actual past, the real heritage which brought forth his group Eckankar in the first place.

Though the psychological *modus operandi* of "emergence by repression" is age-old and is itself instrumental in the evolution of religion, in the case of some of the new panths (particularly Eckankar), it remains an essentially immature and disunifying attempt for genuine autonomy.

NOTES

1. Paul Twitchell and Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind are two significant examples of spiritual teachers who have extensively plagiarized from Radhasoami texts. See Plagiarism in Review for a more in-depth look.
2. Most of this research is based upon my eight trips to North India. First, in the

summer of 1978 with Professor Mark Juergensmeyer of the University of California at Berkeley; and, most recently, in January of 1990, where I saw for the first time Twitchell's extensive correspondence with Kirpal Singh. See *The Delhi Connection* for more information.

3. I have employed the word panth (lit., "way, path, or course") because of its neutral and non-derogatory meaning and use--in contradistinction with the word "cult", which, if anything, has become the mass media's buzz word for the religiously off-beat.

4. The term Shabd has a variety of meanings depending in which context it is used. In Radhasoami terminology, Shabd represents the eternal "force and vitality which permeates the whole universe; it is the cause and sustainer of the entire creation." Refer to *Glossary of Radhasoami Faith* (Agra: Sant Das Maheshwari, 1967), page 227, under the word Shabd.

5. It should be noted that the phrase "Audible Life Stream" did not come into popular usage until Julian P. Johnson's *The Path of the Masters* (1939), a book which has been extensively plagiarized.

6. Surat Shabd Yoga (lit., "the union of the soul/consciousness with the internal spiritual sound") is an ancient discipline designed to enable the soul (or consciousness) to ascend beyond the body to higher spiritual regions by means of the internal sound or life current. It appears that Shabd Yoga has its roots in the pre-Vedic period of India. However, the yogic practice has only become clearly articulated and well-known in the last five-hundred years. Major works which describe or illustrate Shabd Yoga techniques include: *Hathayoga Pradipika*, *Nadabindu Upanishad*, and the writings of the nirguna bhakti poets of the Sant tradition such as Anurag Sagar (attributed to Kabir but most likely of a later time period) and *Ghat Ramayana* by Tulsi Sahib. However, the clearest and most detailed treatment of Surat Shabd Yoga practices comes from Shiv Dayal Singh's *Sar Bachan* (including both the prose and poetry volumes), the main scripture of the Radhasoami movement.

7. This is the first paper of its kind which has examined the close link between the Radhasoami tradition and such popular American religious movements as the Divine Light Mission, Eckankar, M.S.I.A., and Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind's group. Those scholars which have been pioneers in opening up this area of investigation include Professor Mark Juergensmeyer and Dr. J. Gordon Melton.

8. I have spelled the word "Radhasoami" (with the "o" instead of the transliterated "w") in deference to the Soami Bagh Satsang in Agra which consider it an affront not to spell the words Radha and "Soami" together (thereby dropping the capital in the last word). The Beas Satsang and other branches spell it variously and do not mind how "Radhasoami" is spelled. In almost all cases, I have followed Soami Bagh's procedure for spelling, primarily because of their vocalness in the matter. For more on this small, but interesting, controversy see S.D. Maheshwari's *Correspondence with Certain Americans* (Agra: Soami Bagh), Volumes One through Five; and Lekh Raj Puri's *Radha Swami Teachings* (New Delhi: Pvt. published, n.d., 1967?).

9. Ibid. My spelling is again in deference to the Soami Bagh Satsang in Agra.

10. There exists a controversy between the "Beas" and "Agra" satsangs over whether or not Tulsi Sahib was Shiv Dayal Singh's guru. The "Beas" satsang (and those connected with them, including Tarn Taran and Ruhani Satsang) argue that Shiv Dayal Singh was indeed initiated by Tulsi Sahib of Hathras at a young age. The "Agra" satsangs (which include Peepal Mandi, Soami Bagh, and Dayal Bagh) deny any spiritual connection between the esteemed masters, claiming instead that both were swatch Sants (born perfect) and did not, therefore, need the assistance of any guru.

11. Refer to P.D. Barthwal's *The Nirguna School of Hindi Poetry: An Exposition of Medieval Indian Santa Mysticism* (Benares: Indian Book Shop, 1936) and Dr. Mohan Singh's *Goraknath and Medieval Mysticism* (Lahore: 1937).

12. The colony is named Dera Baba Jaimal Singh and is one of the largest spiritual communities in all of India.

13. Charan Singh had the largest following of any Radhasoami guru in the world before his death on June 1, 1990. He had initiated over one million and two-hundred thousand people in his thirty-nine year reign as Sant Satguru.

14. Mark Juergensmeyer, "The Ghadar Syndrome," *Sikh Studies: Comparative Perspectives on a Changing Tradition* (Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union, 1979), page 182.

15. My parenthesis; Thind had written several books before 1939, including *House of Happiness* (Salt Lake: Pvt. publication) in 1931.

16. Kirpal Singh, *Heart to Heart Talks, Volume One* (Delhi: Ruhani Satsang, 1975).

17. Although Kirpal Singh claims that Dr. Thind plagiarized from *Gurmat Sidhant* (which was originally published in Punjabi with Sawan Singh's name as author), most of Thind's literary "borrowing" comes from Julian P. Johnson's *With a Great Master in India* (1934). See *Plagiarism in Review* for more on this topic.

18. In 1977, I talked with Mrs. Thind about her husband's relationship with Sawan Singh of Radhasoami Satsang Beas. Mrs. Thind was informed by her husband that he did not know of Sawan Singh; rather, he claimed to have been initiated by a Himalayan priest and was a disciple of Guru Nanak in a previous incarnation. Although Mrs. Thind had met Kirpal Singh personally and knew about the supposed connection of her husband with the Radhasoami Satsang in Beas, she was never told by Dr. Thind that such a link ever existed.

19. "Mahanta consciousness", as used in Eckankar terminology, means the Divine Master within. It is very similar in usage to the esoteric term "Radiant Form" as spoken of in Radhasoami teachings.

20. See *Plagiarism in Review* .

21. See Part Five.

22. Already several hundred devotees have left Eckankar because of the findings presented in earlier editions of *The Making of a Spiritual Movement* and *SCP*

Journal's "Eckankar: A Hard Look at a New Religion." In fact, several world-wide memos have been issued by Eckankar's international headquarters in Menlo Park, California, warning its membership against the "untrue" accusations of researchers "who have not done their homework." See Preface.

23. Personal interview with John-Roger Hinkins at his home in Mandeville Canyon (1978).

24. Roger's cosmology is exactly the same as Paul Twitchell's. This is unusual because of Twitchell's own creative implantations. Compare the following charts:

Eckankar's cosmology (as found in *The Spiritual Notebook* by Paul Twitchell, dated 1971]: 1. Physical/Thunder 2. Astral/Roar of the Sea 3. Causal/Tinkle of Bells 4. Mental/ Running Water 5. Soul/Single Note of Flute 6. Alakh Lok/Heavy Wind 7. Alaya Lok/Deep Humming 8. Hukikat Lok/Thousand Violins 9. Agam Lok/ Music of Woodwinds 10. Anami Lok/Sound of a Whirl pool.

M.S.I.A.'S cosmology (as found in *The Sound Current* by John-Roger, dated 1976): 1. Physical/Thunder 2. Astral/Roaring Surf 3. Causal/Tinkling of Bells 4. Mental/ Running Water 5. Soul/Sound of a Flute 6. {Regions above Soul are not named in the book--only the Sounds} Sound of Wind 7. Humming Sound 8. Ten Thousand Violins 9. Woodwinds.

The previous cosmologies are almost exactly the same. Twitchell came up with his own unique schema of how the universe is structured, giving a particular sound to each level. John-Roger copied the same verbatim. Both cosmologies, however, represent a radical departure from the Radhasoami esoteric version.

25. I made this observation to John-Roger personally (in 1978, op. cit.) who told me that he had great love for Twitchell and his work. Roger went on to say that he does garner ideas (and organizational procedures) from other spiritual teachers and traditions, while remaining true to his own personal direction and understanding. John-Roger has been the subject of an intense scandal for the past ten years. See *The J.R. Controversy and The Criminal Activities of John-Roger Hinkins* (UCSM, Volume One, Number One and Volume Two, Number Two) for more on J.R.'s nefarious escapades.

26. Personal interview with John-Roger Hinkins at his home in the summer of 1979.

27. Ibid.

28. Insight Training is quite similar in structure to EST, the popular seminar group founded by Werner Erhard.

29. Mark Juergensmeyer, "Radhasoami as a Trans-National Movement" (unedited version); unpublished. In confirmation with Juergensmeyer's contention that Guru Maharaji's father was associated with one of the Radhasoami sects, I was informed personally in July of 1978 at Sawan Ashram, Old Delhi, India, by Bhagwan Gyaniji (who was a disciple of Sawan Singh and personal secretary to Kirpal Singh) that Balyogeshwar's father was indeed initiated by Sawan Singh of the Radhasoami Satsang Beas and later branched off to start his own movement. It also appears that Balyogeshwar's father was a disciple of another Sant mat guru named

Sarupanand, who worked in the tradition of Sri Paramahansa Advaita --a surat shabd yoga lineage apparently connected to Shiv Dayal Singh which was founded in the latter part of the 19th century and is now centered in Guna.

30. Ibid.

31. Telephone interview with Harold Ross, personal follower of Walter Baptiste (1978) and one-time follower of Radhasoami Beas, Soami Bagh, and Eckankar.

32. This same mantra of the "Five Holy Names" is also given out by John-Roger Hinkins of M.S.I.A., though in an altered fashion.

33. Personal letter from Dr. Ramamurti Mishra to the author, dated October 30, 1980.

34. Ramana Maharishi stands out as a classic example.

35. See Plagiarism in Review .

36. Radhasoami, though much of its terminology is from tantric-yogic schools of thought, has a distinctive vocabulary. Phrases such as "Ringing Radiance" and "Audible Life Stream" have come into popular usage because of their frequency in Radhasoami Beas publications.

37. Woodrow Nichols, "Eckankar: The Ancient Science of Deception" (later incorporated in SCP Journal--Eckankar: A Hard Look at a New Religion (Berkeley, 1979).

38. The phrase "genealogical dissociation" is a useful one in that it clearly illustrates what happened in the evolution of Eckankar in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Twitchell attempted to sever his past by not only denying his genuine religious heritage but also by implanting a new spiritual genealogy--one which allegedly traces back to the Master Gakko, who brought the true teachings of Eckankar from the planet Venus.

39. I am not utilizing developmental psychology in order to "reduce" Twitchell's motives to a Freudian or Jungian paradigm, but rather to establish a sympathetic foundation where new religious movements are not just relegated to the academic outposts of "social aberrations." Instead, like most traditional religious groups, these new movements represent basic human drives and emotions. If phylogeny in some way recapitulates ontogeny (or vice versa; refer to Carl Sagan's *Broca's Brain*, 1979), then groups such as Eckankar can be more fully understood in light of human psychology. This, of course, should not be solely an attempt to reduce religion to its neurological roots, but as a partial means for a clearer understanding. See Ken Wilber's *Up From Eden* (New York: Doubleday, 1981) for more on this perspective.

40. Ken Wilber, op. cit.

41. Although in Twitchell's case ignorance does play a part. Eckankar's founder had a short and, oftentimes, inaccurate memory. Once when questioned about his personal guru, Rebazar Tarzs, Twitchell forgot who he was. This could be due to the fact that Rebazar Tarzs is a fictional character, and his autobiographical byline

changed year-to-year with the growth of Eckankar.

42. This "integration" of Judaic culture and religion by the Roman Catholic Church, though, must be contrasted with its "dissociation" of certain Gnostic schools in the Second Century A.D. The Church also tried to destroy some of its own religious roots, including the highly mystical texts produced by "heretical" Gnostic authors.

43. Even though the Church has many times persecuted its religious brothers and sisters in the name of God, anti-semitism, though now formally disdained, has much of its impetus and basis in Catholic history, theology and tradition.

44. The Radhasoami Satsang in Beas has even established a "Mystics of the East Series" which is designed to publish monographs on the life stories of famous Sants in the medieval nirguna bhakti tradition.

45. The secretary of Eckankar once issued a world-wide memo declaring that the works of Julian P. Johnson (from which Twitchell was accused of plagiarizing) were not copyrighted. This, of course, is false since Johnson's Radhasoami books were all copyrighted and remain so today.

46. Including "The Flute of God" which was published in installments in Orion Magazine in the mid-1960's.

47. By 1967, Twitchell had shifted his center of operation to Las Vegas, Nevada, to avoid heavy taxation.

48. See SCP Journal--Eckankar: A Hard Look At A New Religion (Berkeley, 1979).

49. Twitchell's paranoid concern reached a pinnacle when he wrote a personal letter to Kirpal Singh in late 1971, threatening the Ruhani Satsang Master with a lawsuit if he continued claiming that Eckankar was derived from Sant mat teachings. Twitchell died of a heart attack shortly after the letter was received in Old Delhi, India.

50. See my article, "The Hierarchical Structure of Religious Visions," op. cit.

Final Note: This paper was first presented to the American Academy of Religion's Western Region Conference at Stanford University on March 26, 1982.

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From THE MAKING OF A SPIRITUAL MOVEMENT: THE UNTOLD STORY OF PAUL TWITCHELL AND ECKANKAR

Appendix Two

THE SCIENTOLOGY CONNECTION

Paul Twitchell and L. Ron Hubbard

Paul Twitchell was highly influenced by L. Ron Hubbard and his religion Scientology. Recently, a number of important documents have surfaced which shed more light on Twitchell's involvement with the group. A former scientologist and friend of Paul Twitchell in the 1950's recalls:

"Paul Twitchell was a writer hired by L. Ron Hubbard to be in charge of selecting articles on Scientology submitted by parishioners to be published in either Scientology publications or elsewhere as a testimony to the worth of Scientology. When Paul Twitchell found out about the inner workings of Scientology, I remember him saying, "Boy, there is a lot of money in religion."
[Ex-Scientologist member, personal letter, June 23, 1987.]

Paul Twitchell regularly wrote for a Scientologist magazine entitled, **Ability**, which was published in Silver Spring, Maryland. For instance, in issue 61 of "Ability" Twitchell wrote an article called "The Psychology of Slavery" and in issue 70 he composed a piece titled "Outsight." In both articles Twitchell speaks very highly of L. Ron Hubbard. Below are two pertinent excerpts which exemplify Twitchell's keen regard for the founder of Scientology:

"To build an attitude of defeat into the mind's of the enemy is the constant goal of the dictators. Fortunately for the human race there are capable individuals who, like L. Ron Hubbard, founder of Scientology, leader of one of the many groups, are working to help man free himself from such ruthless control. Freedom from artificial conditioning of ingrained reflexes against enslavement of the reactive mind makes such individuals dangerous to the totalitarians. Scientology can undo, fortunately, the poison of psychology the mass-mind has been fed.
[Paul Twitchell, "The Psychology of Slavery," *Ability* (Issue 61, 1957), page 6.]

"Some religious teachings, especially the Hindu practices, affirm that one needs a Guru, or Teacher, for guidance even though the pupil can exteriorize at will. The difference between Scientology and these religious practices is that Ron Hubbard shows us what to do before and after exteriorization. Then following exteriorization we can have use of this ability of OUTSIGHT at its maximum level.

*"In other words, Ron teaches us to stand upon our own feet as **thetans** and not depend upon a Guru to be at our side at all moments instructing us what to do, as the Hindus teach."*

experience in the handling of his capabilities, and without interference from another.

*"That is why Ron never dictates or interferes with our beingness or personal lives, for he realizes that as long as a Scientologist depends upon another to help him he is still effect, not working from cause point, and his self-determinism is low."
[Paul Twitchell, "Outsight," Ability (Issue 70, 1958), page 9.]*

What is most controversial about Twitchell's involvement with Scientology, though, is the fact that he blatantly plagiarized from L. Ron Hubbard's works. A classic example of this comes from Letters to Gail where Twitchell copies L. Ron Hubbard's "The Axioms of Scientology" without mentioning his source. The implication is that Twitchell invented the axioms. The following is a comparison study of Paul Twitchell's plagiarism:

THE AXIOMS OF SCIENTOLOGY

By L. Ron Hubbard

Axiom 1. LIFE IS BASICALLY STATIC. Definition: a Life Static has no mass, no motion, no wave-length, no location in space or in time. It has the ability to postulate and to perceive.

Axiom 2. THE STATIC IS CAPABLE OF CONSIDERATIONS, POSTULATES, AND OPINIONS.

Axiom 3. SPACE, ENERGY, OBJECTS, FORM, AND TIME ARE THE RESULT OF CONSIDERATIONS MADE AND/OR AGREED UPON OR NOT BY THE STATIC, AND ARE PERCEIVED SOLELY BECAUSE THE STATIC CONSIDERS THAT IT CAN PERCEIVE THEM.

Axiom 4. SPACE IS A VIEWPOINT OF DIMENSION.

Axiom 5. ENERGY CONSISTS OF POSTULATED PARTICLES AND SOLIDS.

Axiom 6. OBJECTS CONSIST OF GROUPED PARTICLES AND SOLIDS.

Axiom 7. TIME IS BASICALLY A POSTULATE THAT SPACE AND PARTICLES WILL PERSIST.

Axiom 8. THE APPARENCY OF TIME IS THE CHANGE OF POSITION OF PARTICLES IN SPACE.

Axiom 9. CHANGE IS THE PRIMARY MANIFESTATION OF TIME.

Axiom 10. THE HIGHEST PURPOSE IN THIS UNIVERSE IS THE CREATION OF AN EFFECT.

LETTERS TO GAIL [FEBRUARY 22, 1963]

By Paul Twitchell

1] Life is basically a divine spark. Therefore, this life spark has no mass, no motion, no wavelength, no location in space or in time. It has the ability to postulate and to perceive.

2] . . . It is capable of postulates and powers.

3] . . . Space, energy, objects, form, and time are the results of the powers or agreements by the Soul, they are perceived solely because Soul realizes that It can perceive them.

4] SPACE is a viewpoint of dimension.

- 5] ENERGY consists of postulated particles in spaces.
- 6] OBJECTS consist of grouped particles.
- 7] TIME is basically a postulate that space and particles will persist.
- 8] The APPARENCY OF TIME is the change of position of particles in space.
- 9] CHANGE is the primary manifestation of time.
- 10] . . . That the highest purpose in the universe is the creation of an effect.

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THE DELHI CONNECTION

Discovering Twitchell's Initiation Papers

[March 1988, Sawan-Kirpal Ashram, Vijay Nagar, Old Delhi, India]

In March of 1988, I was invited by Sant Darshan Singh, the son and chief spiritual successor of the late Kirpal Singh, to visit him and his wife at Sawan-Kirpal Ashram in Vijay Nagar, Old Delhi, India. It was my sixth meeting with the venerable leader of one of the largest surat shabd yoga groups in the world. Darshan was a well known Urdu mystic poet and had written a number of books on spirituality, including *Spiritual Awakening* and *Secret of Secrets*.

Although I have had long talks with Darshan Singh before (ranging from two to ten hours), I did not suspect that for the next two days we would spend close to ten hours together discussing various aspects of Radhasoami and Sant mat. What was most remarkable about this particular visit, though, was that Darshan had located Paul Twitchell's initiation records and other related correspondence (they had been lost for a number of years due to mismanagement on the part of Madam Hardevi and Thakar Singh), which clearly documented the founder of Eckankar's ten year plus association with Kirpal Singh and Ruhani Satsang. It was a rare opportunity for me, so I meticulously went over the file which contained a number of affectionate letters by Paul Twitchell to his "Master" Kirpal Singh.

Paul Twitchell was duly initiated in 1955 by Kirpal Singh, as had been known for sometime. His experiences at initiation appeared to be significant: he heard the inner sound, saw light, and felt elevation. Indeed, Twitchell's subsequent correspondence with Kirpal Singh reveals that he had nightly excursions out of his body, apparently visiting higher astral regions and conversing with a number of spiritual masters, including Sawan Singh. Interestingly enough, however, Twitchell did not mention Rebazar Tarzs or Sudar Singh in any of his letters to Kirpal Singh - not even once. This is quite revealing since Twitchell's letters span more than a decade (1955-1966). From a close reading of the correspondence, it is obvious that Twitchell's inspiration for Eckankar came directly from his contact with Kirpal Singh and Ruhani Satsang. In fact, Twitchell even goes so far as to ask Kirpal Singh to publish his book *The Tiger's Fang* in 1966, well over a year after he founded Eckankar.

Apparently Twitchell's break with Kirpal Singh had more to do with economics than anything else. If Eckankar had not taken off as it did (attracting a large number of Americans interested in astral travel and other esoteric matters willing to pay money for membership, books, and interviews), Twitchell most likely would have kept in friendly contact with Kirpal Singh. As it turned out though, Kirpal Singh represented a significant threat to Twitchell's emerging empire, since, unlike Eckankar, Ruhani Satsang offered its teachings for free.

In sum, Twitchell's decision to cover-up his past associations with Swami Premananda, Kirpal Singh, and others appears to be financially motivated.

Another interesting piece of information that I learned from the files was that...

initiation record, which shows that she was initiated in 1955 and, like her husband Paul, apparently had good experiences at the time of initiation (hearing inner sound, seeing light, feeling bliss). I should add that these initiation papers (1955 and 1963) were personally signed by Paul and Gail respectively. Twitchell's file also contains several pictures of him and Kirpal Singh together; these were taken in 1955 while Kirpal Singh was on his first tour of the United States.

In 1955 alone Twitchell had written ten letters to Kirpal Singh; each one describing, albeit briefly, Twitchell's inner experiences in meditation. Concerning these experiences, a close reading of Twitchell's descriptions indicates that most of them occurred while he was asleep. That is, Twitchell's inner voyages are, for the most part, dream excursions, which may or may not have been consciously produced. One comes away with the impression that Paul's technique for inducing out of body experiences was to lie down and fall asleep, only to awaken minutes or hours later in a lucid (read astral) dream. It may have been precisely for this reason that Kirpal Singh dismissed many of Twitchell's inner experiences as inaccurate and incomplete.

Kirpal Singh's responses were also revealing, since in none of the letters that I read did the Ruhani Satsang master reprimand Twitchell for his behavior. Rather, Kirpal Singh was tolerant of Twitchell's ways, and always appeared interested in the work that he was doing. In one letter, Kirpal Singh even asked for Twitchell's help in getting one of his books published in America.

What finally emerges from Twitchell's file is a portrait of a spiritual seeker turned economic opportunist. Instead of admitting to his weaknesses (like persistent lying and gross exaggeration), Paul instead tried to cover them up under the guise of being an enlightened being and a genuine spiritual master in the "Vairagi" tradition. Sadly, he was neither.

[A Case Study of Plagiarism](#)

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Appendix Four

A CASE STUDY OF PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism: An appropriation or copying from the work of another, in literature or art, and the passing off of the same as original.
-Encyclopaedia Britannica-

Paul Twitchell claimed that his book, **The Far Country** (written in the late 1960's), was dictated to him by Tibetan Master, Rebazar Tarzs. The work, however, was almost entirely copied from the early books of Julian P. Johnson and L. Ron Hubbard. Over four-hundred paragraphs alone of *The Far Country* were directly taken from Johnson's two books: *With a Great Master in India* (copyright 1933) and *The Path of the Masters* (copyright 1939). There are many more words, sentences, and even paragraphs which Twitchell borrowed from Johnson's books, but I have only given a list of those examples which quite clearly display Twitchell's plagiarism. Below is a paragraph rundown:

Chapter One, "The Far Country"

PARAGRAPHS: 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 97, 98, 110, 111, 115, 123, 124, 125, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157.

[Compare with *The Path of the Masters* (pages 283-285) and *With a Great Master in India* (pages 199-206)]

Chapter Three, "The Disinterested Works"

PARAGRAPHS: 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 49, 50, 51, 52, 55, 56, 57, 88, 89, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 99, 100, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118.

[Compare with *The Path of the Masters* (pages 343-362, 364-393, and 453-469)]

Chapter Four, "The Immortal Tuza"

PARAGRAPHS: 31, 32, 33, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113.

[Compare with The Path of the Masters (pages 316-336)]

Chapter Five, "The Worship of Kali"

PARAGRAPHS: 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 82, 84, 85, 86, 87.

[Compare with The Path of the Masters (pages 436-445)]

Chapter Six, "That Alone Exists"

PARAGRAPHS: 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 78, 80, 99, 100, 102, 103, 104, 105, 107, 108, 109, 110.

[Compare with The Path of the Masters ("Review of World Religions")]

Chapter Seven, "The Path to Eckankar"

PARAGRAPHS: 33, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 59, 60, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108.

[Compare with The Path of the Masters (pages 474-502)]

Chapter Eight, "The Rest Points of Eternity"

PARAGRAPHS: 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89.

[Compare with The Path of the Masters (pages 387-392)]

Chapter Nine, "The No-Existence of Space"

PARAGRAPHS: 94, 95, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102.

[Compare with The Path of the Masters (pages 529-532)]

Chapter Ten, "The Tuzashottama Energy"

PARAGRAPHS: 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 102, 103, 104, 107, 108.

[Compare with The Path of the Masters (pages 537-547)]

Chapter Eleven, "The Sugmad of Being"

PARAGRAPHS: 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 47, 48.

[Compare with The Path of the Masters (pages 1-24)]

Chapter Twelve, "The Philosophy of Eckankar"

PARAGRAPHS: 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41.

[Compare with The Path of the Masters (pages 184-195)]

SELECTED EXAMPLES OF PLAGIARISM

It is this divine current, wave or stream going forth from God himself, and flowing throughout the universe. But when God speaks, he not only sets in motion etheric vibrations but he himself moves in and through those vibrations. In truth it is God himself that vibrates all through infinite space. God is not static, latent; He is superlatively dynamic. When he speaks, everything in existence vibrates, and that is the Sound, the Shabd; and it can be heard by the inner ear, which has been trained to hear it. It is the divine energy in process of manifestation which is the holy Shabd. It is in fact the only way in which the Supreme One can be seen and heard--this mighty, luminous and musical wave, creating and enchanting. Now, this great fact of Nature, so little known to either ancient or modern thought, is the vital substance of the Science of the Masters. It is cardinal and central in all their teachings. It is the one thing which distinguishes Santon Ki Shiksha from all other sciences or systems. It is the very foundation of their system of yoga. It is the key to all of their success in unfolding their spiritual power and controlling their minds. It is the one sign by which a real Master may be known and recognized from all others. No one is or can be a genuine Master unless he teaches and practices the Audible Life Stream; because it is impossible for any one to become a spiritual Master of the highest order unless he consciously utilizes the Life Stream to gain his development.

--Julian P. Johnson, The Path of the Masters (page 475)

It is the divine current, wave, or stream, going forth from The ALONE ITSELF and flowing throughout the universe. This is what is called spirit or the Holy Ghost or what we know as the ECK! When the ALONE speaks, it not only sets in motion etheric vibrations, but it Itself moves in and through those vibrations. In truth, it is The ALONE Itself that vibrates through in finite space. The ALONE is not static, but it is superlatively dynamic and therefore everything in existence vibrates and that is the Sound, the ECK. It can be heard by the inner ear which has been trained to hear it. It is the divine energy in process of manifestation which is the holy ECK. It is in fact, the only way in which the Supreme One can be seen and heard--this mighty, luminous and musical wave, creating and enchanting. This great truth so little known to either ancient or modern thought, is the vital substance of the science of the masters. It is cardinal

and central in all of their teachings. It is the foundation of all systems for spiritual unfoldment. It is the key to all of their success in unfolding their spiritual powers and controlling their minds. No one is nor can be a genuine master unless he teaches and practices the spiritual exercises of ECK; because it is impossible for anyone to become a highly developed spiritual person unless he consciously utilizes the ECK to gain his unfoldment.

--Paul Twitchell, Letters to Gail, Vol. I (pages 79-80)

It is called Sound Current in India, among those who speak English. But the best translation which we have been able to discover is: Audible Life Stream. This appears to carry its deeper meaning and is more comprehensive and inclusive. It is, in fact, a stream, a life-giving, creative stream and it can be heard. The fact that it is audible is extremely important and that idea must be conveyed, if possible, in any name that is applied to it. This current or wave contains the sum of all teaching emanating from God. It is his own Word. It includes everything that God has ever said or done. It is God himself in expression. It is the method of God in making himself known. It is his language. It is his Word. This Sound sometimes is called Name; in Sanskrit or Hindi , Nam. But in English, we are not accustomed to put so much meaning in the word "name." It is only correct if we understand that "name" or Nam stands for all that the Supreme Being is. To distinguish God in action from God as divine Essence, we call him Shabd or living Word. This divine Nam, or Sound, or Word, stands for all that God is or has ever said or done. It includes all of his qualities. As said before, it is the only way in which the universal Spirit can manifest itself to human consciousness. So when the supreme Being manifests himself as Sat Nam in Sach Khand he there becomes fully personified, embodied, and brings into manifestation all of the qualities of deity. As Sat Nam he becomes the Fountain out of which the Audible Life Stream proceeds. This stream may be perceived and heard by all who participate in it throughout the worlds.

Julian P. Johnson, The Path of the Masters (pages 476-478)

It is commonly known to most westerners as the Life Stream--this appears to carry its deeper meaning, and is more comprehensive and inclusive. It is in fact a stream, a life-giving creative stream, and it can be heard. The fact that it is audible is extremely important, and that idea must be conveyed, if possible, in any name that is applied to it. This current or wave contains the sum of all teaching emanating from the Alone. It is Its Word. It includes everything that the Alone has ever said or done. It is the Alone itself in expression and it is the method of the Alone in making itself known; it is Its language and it is Its Word. This sound is sometimes called Name in Sanskrit or Hindi, shortened many times to Nam. The western world isn't accustomed to putting so much meaning in the word name. But in India the word means among certain sects that name, or ECK all that the Alone is. It is the whole Divine Being in action. To distinguish the Alone in action from the Alone as divine essence, He is called the ECK or Living Word. The divine Nam or Sound or Word stands for all that the Alone is or has ever said or done, therefore it includes all its qualities, and is the only way in which the universal Spirit can manifest itself to human consciousness. So, when the Supreme Sugmad manifests Itself as the ECK, it becomes fully personified, embodied, individualized, for the first time and bring into manifestation all of the qualities of deity. On this plane It becomes the Fountain out of which the ECK, Audible Life Stream, flows.

--Paul Twitchell, Letters to Gail, Vol. I (pages 80-81)

He (Jaimal Singh) at last heard of a sadhu who lived in a distant jungle. He went to him. The sadhu was much pleased and told him to go to Agra where lived a perfect Mahatma who could instruct him in the five melodies. His long search was ended. After some time with Swami Ji, Jaimal Singh had problems with his inward progress. .Baba Ji asked: "What is the proof that I have already done the practice?" Swami Ji replied: "If you want proof, then sit down for Bhajan and close your eyes." Then Swami Ji drew his soul and took it as high as Daswan Dwar; and Swarup the master 5 radiant form was with it all the way.

--Extracts from the "Preface" to Sar Bachan by Shiv Dayal Singh; translated by Sewa Singh, with Preface by Dr. Julian P. Johnson

Sudar Singh, the guru in the Eck line of masters, was a follower of Rebazar Tarzs. When a very young man, he was told by a sadhu to make his way to Agra where he was to find Rebazar, who would lift him into heaven via soul travel. In the year 1885, he found the master and asked for proof. He was told that if [he] sat down for meditation and closed his eyes, he would see the proof. Then, according to the records, Sudar Singh was lifted as high as the third place Daswan Dwar in the presence of his guru's radiant form.

--Paul Twitchell, Eckankar: The Key to Secret Worlds (San Diego: Illuminated Way Press, 1974), page 123

Not only does Twitchell reveal his plagiarism of Julian Johnson in the above comparisons, but he also shows that the life story of "Sudar Singh" is a composite taken from narratives of previous real-life masters.

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David Lane "Live" on Alt.Religion.Eckankar.

- [Explanation of what these posts are](#)
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Darwin Gross versus David Lane

I recently received a letter from Darwin Gross attempting to defend Paul Twitchell and the early history of Eckankar. I have finished my rebuttal. Anyone interested in reading Darwin's letter and my response should send e-mail directly to me and I will send it; otherwise it will be available from Del Mar Press (P.O.Box 2508, Del Mar, California 92014) for free. It is five pages, single spaced.

The Making of a Spiritual Movement: The Untold Story of Paul Twitchell and Eckankar is also currently available in a new edition from Del Mar Press. Garland Publishing, Inc. (New York and London) had planned to publish it in 1993, but due to Eckankar's persisting legal threats they decided it would be best if they did not come out with a hardback version. I have also compiled some pertinent documents which may be of some interest to those who want to know the inside history to the movement. I should also point out that J. Gordon Melton has also written summaries of my research and that of SCP's in several of his encyclopedias, including the Encyclopedic Handbook of Cults. Garland Publishing has also published a critical history of Radhasoami guru succession (the main catalyst for Twitchell's Eckankar movement, John-Roger's M.S.I.A., and a host of other New Age styled religions) which I wrote as my Ph.D. dissertation back in 1991. Also coming out is *Exposing Cults: When the Skeptical Mind Confronts the Mystical* (Garland: August 1994).

I should also mention that there are a number of good "outside" studies of shabd yoga, sant mat, and radhasoami, which are written from a critical perspective. Juergensmeyer's *Radhasoami Reality* (Princeton University Press) is perhaps the best of its kind. There are now more than 30 shabd yoga related groups operating in America which have some genealogical connection to Sant Mat/Radhasoami. To list a few: Ching Hai (Buddhist/Sant Mat fusion: she was initiated by Thakar Singh); John Roger Hinkins (Mormon/Eckankar/Sant Mat fusion; he was initiated by Paul Twitchell); Jerry Mulvin (he was a higher initiate in Eckankar); Rajinder Singh (Darshan Singh's successor and the heir to Paul Twitchell's own teacher, Kirpal Singh); Gary Olsen (and the Master Path; followed Eckankar); Divine Light Mission (whose founder and Guru Maharaji's father was a follower of Sarupanand and Sawan Singh); and many more.

EXPOSING CULTS

When God Responds

Issue Two

The Critic's Circular on New Religions

Sri Darwin Gross vs. Lane

EXPOSING CULTS

"When the Skeptical Mind Confronts the Mystical"

WHEN GOD RESPONDS

Sri Darwin Gross versus David Lane

Publisher's Note: In March of 1994 David Lane's newest edition of *The Making of a Spiritual Movement: The Untold Story of Paul Twitchell and Eckankar* was published. Previous editions of the book (1978, 1979, 1983, and 1989) caused a tremendous controversy within the movement prompting thousands of Eckists to leave the group. [Garland Publishing, Inc. (New York & London) had originally planned to publish an updated version of Lane's text in 1993, but due to persisting legal threats from Eckankar the publishing house decided against it.]

several of Lane's documented allegations. The following is Lane's point by point rebuttal:

Sri Darwin Gross:

" . . . It has come to my attention that David C. Lane, Ph.D. [sic] has revised his book about Paul Twitchell, the Corp"

Whenever Darwin mentions the "Corp" or "Corporation," he is referring to Eckankar. The reason Darwin calls it the "Corp" instead of simply saying Eckankar is because he has been involved in a legal dispute with Eckankar over copyrighted terms. Apparently Darwin is worried that he might be sued if mentions Eckankar by name. See "When God Gets Dethroned: The Downfall of Darwin Gross" in the 1994 edition of *The Making of a Spiritual Movement*

*" and Myself [sic]. You might say bad mouthing both Paul and Darwin. This article is an attempt to set straight some of the facts that, [sic] I know for myself to be true about Paul Twitchell and the organization he started while he was here in the physical, and some of the charges that David Lane brought up in his book, **The Making of a Spiritual Movement**, about Paul, about the corporation that Paul started, and some false accusations about Paul Twitchell, including myself.*

*"First of all, there is no denying that there are a few paragraphs in **The Far Country** that are similar to another book written by another spiritual author in Australia. Now, when one contemplates and goes to that temple within, that's going to the same well. That's something David Lane can't get into his head, let alone Mark Albrecht of the Spiritual Counterfeits and the die hard Christians."*

David Lane:

You claim that Paul Twitchell's book, *The Far Country*, contains a "few paragraphs" that are "similar to another book written by another spiritual author in Australia." On both accounts, Darwin, you are wrong. First, at least one-half of *The Far Country* was appropriated from the writings of Julian P. Johnson (author of four books on Sant Mat in the 1930s, including *With a Great Master in India*; *Call of the East*; *The Unquenchable Flame*; and *The Path of the Masters*). As for the "other" half of *The Far Country*, it appears that Twitchell copied from a host of other writers. I don't consider over 400 paragraphs to be few.

Second, Julian P. Johnson was not from Australia as you erroneously claim. In fact, he was from Kentucky - the same state where Paul Twitchell was born.

Third, you claim that Johnson and Twitchell went to the same "well" to get their information. Not only is your explanation a fairly lame attempt to condone plagiarism, but I can show you text-by-text, paragraph-by-paragraph, sentence-by-sentence how you are wrong. Johnson wrote in a distinctive style which reflected (for better or worse) his upbringing, his cultural values, his racism, his sexism, and the 1930s in which he was writing. Johnson also made a number of spelling and grammatical errors (which were only corrected in later editions in the 1970s and 1980s - long after Twitchell's own death). Now Twitchell not only duplicates Johnson's seasoned and nuanced style, but he also copies verbatim his grammar/spelling mistakes. Moreover, when Johnson does quote other writers from other "worldly" sources (read: not astrally deposited books), he properly cites them and their respective texts.

When Twitchell plagiarized Johnson he forgot to differentiate between Johnson's own writing and Johnson's quoted material. Thus, by this very simple blunder Twitchell exposed the secret behind his writing: he was parroting what he had read from *The Path of the Masters* and *With a Great Master in India*. By the way, Darwin, I don't ask you to believe me; I simply ask that you read both books side by side and see for yourself. As you often say, "seeing is believing." Twitchell was, to be sure, a notorious plagiarizer and purloiner of copyrighted material. To deny that fact (and it is a fact) is to simply display your own ignorance of

copyright laws (something which you must be familiar with after your legal battles with the "Corporation" - that is, Eckankar). Let me put it more bluntly, if one of my college students plagiarized just 1/10 of what Twitchell appropriated, he or she would not only receive an "F" in my class but he/she would be expelled from the college. Do you really want to have a higher moral standard for high school or college students and a lesser one for God-realized masters?

[Sidebar: I am convinced that Twitchell plagiarized a lot more than I even suggest - which is, of course, bad enough. Remember that I have touched only the tip of a huge iceberg of literary piracy.]

Sri Darwin Gross:

"David Lane has made a statement that I asked the chelas to destroy the SCP Journal, back in December [sic] 27,

The Spiritual Counterfeits Project in Berkeley, California, published an extensive critique of Eckankar's history and theology in 1979 largely based upon my 1977 and 1978 term papers for a religious studies class at California State University, Northridge. SCP's journal "Eckankar: A Hard Look at New Religion" was widely distributed.

1979. That is false and taken out of context. I could not find a record of his statement. At that period of time I was in Holland and had been for two weeks. He'll have to produce that one; I don't have a copy of it, and I've never asked anyone to burn or destroy anyone else's writings."

David Lane:

Concerning the infamous December 27, 1979 document which you claim you have not seen and did not write, you must not have looked very hard since I included a photocopy of the original in the 1983 version of The Making of a Spiritual Movement. For your convenience, I append a copy. As you will no doubt see, you did clearly ask for the SCP Journals to be destroyed. Your claim that my statement is both "false and taken out of context" sounds like so much doublespeak to me. Better check with your secretary, Bernadine, since she (along with your memory) is the only one you can blame now.

Sri Darwin Gross:

"Second, he called Paul a follower of the Radha Soami [sic] and initiated by Kirpal Singh.

Darwin has his details wrong here. I actually said that Paul Twitchell was a follower of Ruhani Satsang (as founded by Kirpal Singh), which is an offshoot from the Radhasoami Satsang Beas branch.

"Both those charges are false. Had he read Paul's books and writings,

If I may interject an autobiographical note to Darwin's incorrect categorical statement, I would like to mention that I have read every "available" book authored by Paul Twitchell. I say "available" precisely because some of his writings were distributed only to higher initiates in Eckankar. Perhaps to the chagrin of Darwin and Harold, I have also had the opportunity to read most of that secret material as well.

"he would have learned that Paul's mission was to study every cult, occult, and spiritual path on Earth, to learn how they were made up, what they do, and that includes Scientology and the all [sic] churches. In fact, his mother took him to the Catholic church when he was

younger and he studied all groups of teachings that had any significance whatsoever.

"I know for my own self, the corporation used to have a letter that Paul wrote to Kirpal Singh: (a) telling him to leave him alone; (b) that he never was initiated by Kirpal Singh; and (c) he was never a student. Paul only sat in on a satsang to learn how Kirpal Singh did it. I know David Lane went over to India in an attempt to find out something about Paul and he couldn't find anything."

David Lane:

You are wrong again in saying that I went to India and found nothing concerning Paul Twitchell's connection with Kirpal Singh. As I mention in **The Delhi Connection: Discovering Twitchell's Initiation Papers** in my 1989 and 1994 versions of *The Making of a Spiritual Movement* I was privy to all of the letters Kirpal Singh received from Paul Twitchell over a ten year span. Not only did Twitchell receive initiation from Kirpal Singh in 1955 (the initiation papers, by the way, are personally signed by Twitchell), but his wife (and yours) Gail also received initiation in 1963 (her signature is also on record).

In Twitchell's correspondence with Kirpal Singh he addresses almost every letter with honorifics, such as "Dear Beloved Master," "Dear Beloved Guru," or "My Holy Master," etc. There are tens of letters from 1955 to 1966 written by Paul Twitchell to Kirpal Singh, each filled with loving accolades to his "Guru." If you don't believe me, Darwin, then write to Rajinder Singh (Kirpal Singh's grandson) at Vijay Nagar, Delhi, India, since he now has control of the complete Twitchell/Kirpal Singh file.

You claim, Darwin, that "Paul only sat in on a satsang to learn how Kirpal Singh did it." Again, not only is your claim wholly inaccurate and misleading, but it contradicts Paul Twitchell's own writing on the subject. Twitchell himself has stated in print in at least twenty different places that Kirpal Singh was his guru, the master who taught him shabd yoga. I am not the one making the claim about Twitchell's association with Kirpal Singh and Ruhani Satsang, your own teacher did.

Moreover, we have numerous pictures, tape-recordings, letters, documents, etc., which attest to Twitchell's study under Kirpal Singh. You are being deceptive when you say that Twitchell sat "in a satsang." It was Twitchell who dedicated the original Tiger's Fang to Kirpal Singh. (I have seen Twitchell's own personal letter to this effect.). It was Twitchell who brought his second wife (and yours) to get initiated by Kirpal Singh in 1963. It was Twitchell who kept up a ten year correspondence with the Delhi guru.

Sri Darwin Gross:

*" Another fact, he was quoting that Paul changed Kirpal Singh's name to Sudar Singh. Some of the items of Paul's included a painting of Sudar Singh. It was nothing like Kirpal Singh or any of the Singhs associated with Radha Soami. It was an initiate of Paul's that did some editing for him in the **Flute of God** and was a former Radha Soami student, when he came to the name of Sudar Singh he changed it to Kirpal Singh without checking with Paul."*

David Lane:

I must confess, Darwin, that I am a bit surprised by your lack of ingenuity. If you want to defend your teacher, Paul Twitchell, there are no doubt many ways to do it. But to completely overlook the plethora of historical documents which univocally attest to Paul Twitchell's discipleship under Kirpal Singh is really not a very wise defense on your part. Why? Because all one has to do to refute your claim is to look at Paul's early writings before Eckankar was officially founded. In almost every one of his early articles (written for a wide variety of magazines, ranging from *Orion* to *Psychic Observer* to *Search*) Paul mentions Kirpal Singh.

Your excuse that some former Radha Soami student edited out "Sudar Singh" in the original versions without Paul's permission contradicts not only Paul's early writings (before he started Eckankar) but also his early advertisements for Eckankar wherein he states that he

was a follower of Kirpal Singh. Moreover, you have the story backwards. The name "Sudar Singh" does not appear in the original, manuscript version of Letters to Gail. The name Kirpal Singh does. Why? Because Gail was also a fellow initiate of Kirpal Singh and was well aware of his life and work. It was only after Eckankar was successful that Twitchell commenced an international cover-up concerning his actual spiritual heritage.

The idea that one would switch "Sudar" to "Kirpal" and then back to "Sudar" displays how illogical you can be and also how completely misinformed you really are. Without intending to be patronizing may I ask you a very pertinent question: "Have you ever read my book, The Making of a Spiritual Movement?" I seriously doubt it. You seem to have your information upside down. Now don't get me wrong, I don't mind honest criticism, but your points are so convoluted and so completely non-factual that I can only wonder if indeed you have checked the documented evidence for yourself. I sense that you are relying on second-hand reports of what I say versus investigating the matter for yourself. I say all of this primarily because the original "Flute of God" appeared in installments for Orion magazine, not as an Eckankar book. It is in that more "raw" form that we find the name "Kirpal Singh," "Swami Premananda," etc.

Furthermore, we also have tens of other name replacements which occur after Eckankar is started in 1965, including changing the original source of the "Bible" to the "Shariyat-ki-Sugmad." What you fail to notice is that Sudar Singh's name does not appear in print until after 1964, whereas Kirpal Singh's name is mentioned repeatedly before and after that date. Additionally, there is no good reason for that Radha Soami student (I assume you are referring to Dr. Louis Bluth, who was initiated by Sawan Singh and eventually became the President of Eckankar, only to later disavow both you and Eckankar as frauds) to replace "Sudar" with "Kirpal," since Kirpal Singh was viewed as an offshoot from Radhasoami and not regarded as a genuine master. Indeed, it was precisely because Twitchell was a disciple of Kirpal Singh that he utilized the phony name of "Sudar" to cover his tracks.

By the way, Darwin, do you have an address for Sudar Singh in Allahabad? Do you have any of his writings? Do you have any of his books? Why is it that I have seen tens of letters by Paul Twitchell to Kirpal Singh, but not one authentic one to Sudar Singh? Why is it that nobody in the shabd yoga tradition has ever heard of such a Sudar Singh? (Not to be confused with Sudarshan Singh, the nephew of Shiv Dayal Singh, who associated with Soami Bagh in Agra.). Why is it that when Mark Juergensmeyer, J. Gordon Melton, Daniel Gold, W.H. McLeod, Aaron Talsky, and a host of other Shabd yoga scholars investigated the history of Sant Mat and Radhasoami, Sudar Singh's life and work did not come to light?

I know why and you should too: Sudar Singh, as such, does not exist. He is a cover-name to hide Paul Twitchell's association with real-life gurus like Swami Premananda, Kirpal Singh, L. Ron Hubbard and others. I can present overwhelming documentation to "prove" Twitchell's association with Kirpal Singh. Darwin, can you give me just one "documented" piece of evidence proving Twitchell's association with the so-called Sudar Singh? And please do not tell me that a "painting" of Sudar Singh proves his existence. [Given that modus operandi for legitimizing truth, then I can say that Elvis is not really dead, but working in the witness protection program because he wanted to get his A.A. degree at Rio Hondo in southern California (Elvis was really upset about his lack of education).]

Darwin, you definitely have the right to defend Paul Twitchell, but I would prefer if you would engage in facts instead of misconstructions of imagined or wanna-be history.

Sri Darwin Gross:

"In putting together the corporation that Paul put together, an enormous amount of people misunderstood what he had written and spoken of from the platform. I don't recall who it was that did a study of Paul's writings, in regards to this plagiarism statement, that they found less than 1% of all that he wrote to be similar to another's writings. They forget the man, Paul Twitchell, had a photographic memory. He could read something and recite or write it later word for word. Now, if you call that plagiarism fine, but it's a fact."

David Lane:

You have succeeded, Darwin, in the course of four sentences to contradict yourself four times. Either Twitchell's writings are original (which you claim by citing that unknown author who studied Twitchell's writings and found less than 1% similarity) or they are not. You can't have it both ways. So why do you then proceed to mention Twitchell's photographic memory and his ability to recite quotations from books word for word? What does that have to do with Twitchell's so-called originality? The answer, of course, is nothing except that you simply can't get the story straight nor can you decide how to properly defend the literary transgressions of your mentor. You are simply wrong when you try to buttress your argument that Twitchell did not plagiarize by invoking some unknown study by some unknown author.

I know why you cannot remember who did the study because it was never done. And, if in the off chance that it was, I can assure you that its findings are completely mistaken. Twitchell is truly one of the great plagiarists of the 20th century. I don't say this lightly and I am not trying to over-hype my case. There are not many successful authors who have copied whole books from other writers and gotten away with it. Twitchell thought he could because he was using rather obscure material. Julian Johnson's book were popular to a very select audience and not generally known to the reading public. Twitchell didn't just plagiarize from Johnson; he plagiarized from a variety of sources; it just happens that Johnson was his favorite author to crib from. By the way, all Twitchell had to do was properly cite and contextualize his material. I don't see why this is so hard to do. Grammar school kids are taught to reference materials. Why can't an Eckankar Master do the same?

Again, if you don't trust my seasoned observations on this plagiarism issue, then I suggest that you do your own cross-referencing. I guarantee you that your opinion will change if you really study how Twitchell copied profusely from other authors.

Sri Darwin Gross:

"Another fact, Paul never tried to cover up his actual spiritual heritage. That is another story by David Lane, [sic] that Paul tried to cover up his spiritual heritage. You see, I have met those great teachers that Paul wrote about and spoke of. I have met them all, each one of the individuals, such as Gopal Das, off the astral plane, with his golden hair, a beautiful soul. Banjani, out in the Gobi Desert, very much alive. Then on up, clear up to the soul plane, every master on each level or dimension I have met, and other too many to mention. Fubbi Quantz appeared to me when I started out studying Paul's writings. It's a beautiful experience filled with Divine Love! I'll never forget it. Rebazar Tarzs appeared to me, and a host of other individual masters of this teaching that Paul brought forth to this world, which started in 1965, and still coming out and being perpetuated by myself, under a different name called "The Ancient Teachings of the Masters." It engulfs all of mankind's teachings, whether David Lane or some other die-hard Christian, TV preacher or what-have-you tries to rebuke it."

David Lane:

I am happy that you have seen Fubbi, Rebazar, and Banjani in your dreams/visions. However, just because you have seen such individuals in your meditation or dreams does not mean that they actually exist as historical characters. As you know, thousands of people from around the world have all sorts of visions, many of which occur when they undergo a Near-Death experience. We have heard reports of individuals seeing Jesus, Guru Nanak, and Krishna. But such reported visions do not necessarily confer ontological status to such beings. Rather they simply reflect the cultural and religious interplay of information available to individuals at any one given time.

As such, then, visions tell us more about what one has been taught or indoctrinated into than about the relative historicity or facticity of divine beings. Keep in mind that thousands of people see visions of non-historical beings; individuals who do not exist in actual fact, but are rather the outcome of a skewed combination of imagination, desire, fact, and fiction. Remember people also see Elvis, Bart Simpson, and even Flour Tortillas in the afterlife. [I am not jesting on the last point, since I personally talked with an Indian woman who claimed to

have seen a radiant, beautiful chapatti - a whole wheat flour tortilla - in the middle of a tunnel of light; she claimed it was a truly exquisite piece of bread, with a wonderful halo around it.] Thus, just because you claim, Darwin, to have seen Gopal Das with his "golden hair" does not mean by extension or logic or circumstance that he does, in fact, exist.

For that matter, we all see many things in our dreams which do not have an existence outside of our own perceptions. We should not confuse reported visions with so-called proofs of their empirical status. Twitchell literally created a galaxy of Eck names in order to deceive his followers from his real and imagined past. He also came up with such comical sounding names to give the would-be Eckist a sense of mystery and antiquity about their newly discovered religion.

The trouble with all of this, of course, is that Twitchell was creating a mythology which intertwined (but did not distinguish) fact from fiction, imagination from reality. For your benefit, Darwin, I enclose a section from my forthcoming book, **Exposing Cults: When the Skeptical Mind Confronts the Mystical** (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., August 1994) which explains in some detail about how we should be skeptical of our own religious visions.

By the way, it was fun communicating with you and I invite you to write back with any further comments, suggestions, or criticisms. I only ask you to do one thing beforehand: do some research.

Sincerely,

David Lane

P.S. I append the article, [The Politics of Mysticism](#) and the infamous 1979 document wherein you ask for the destruction of the SCP journal.

[The Politics of Mysticism](#)

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No one really knows the sheer extent of Twitchell's literary theft, although it's known to be extensive. He was a blatant plagiarist and the stolen words often ended up in the mouths of his fictional Eck masters. Just recently, 30 years after his death, even more plagiarisms are turning up.

Shown here are some paragraphs (a small sampling) lifted from the works of **Walter Russell** and placed into his own book *The Tiger's Fang*. What should cause us to pause a bit is that Twitchell and Eckankar claimed (and still do) that *The Tiger's Fang* was a true account of his inner journey to the Godhead. But it's certainly reasonable to question any and all Twitchell claims. If he did have such a journey, why the need to steal other authors' accounts of their personal journeys? Could it be, perhaps, that Twitchell never had the grandiose journeys he wanted his followers to believe?

In the second chapter of *The Tiger's Fang*, Twitchell was found to have lifted over 50 paragraphs from the works of Walter Russell. A close look at the third chapter of *The Tiger's Fang* reveals still more plagiarism of Russell's **THE SECRET OF LIGHT, copyright 1947**.

THE SECRET OF LIGHT
by Walter Russell:

"God is consciousness. Consciousness is static." p. 22

THE TIGER'S FANG, 2nd edition:

"Know this: God is consciousness and consciousness is static, or stillness, whatever you desire to call it." p.40

THE SECRET OF LIGHT
by Walter Russell:

"Consciousness is the spiritual awareness of Being, of all-knowing, all- power and all-presence."

"Thinking is the motionless principle in light which creates the illusion of motion."

"The Self of man belongs to the static, invisible, conscious, unconditioned universe of KNOWING." p.22

THE TIGER'S FANG, 2nd edition:

"Consciousness is the spiritual awareness of being, of all-knowing, all- power, and all-presence. Thinking is the motionless principle in Light and Sound which creates the illusion of motion; therefore all lower mind and thought is dropped on this plane. We know and understand." p. 40

THE SECRET OF LIGHT
Walter Russell:

"The Self of man belongs to the static, invisible, conscious, unconditioned universe of KNOWING. We express knowing in the dynamic, visible, electrically conditioned universe of perception." p.22

THE TIGER'S FANG, 2nd edition:

"The Soul of man belongs to the static, invisible, conscious, unconditioned world of knowing. You express knowing in the dynamic, visible, electrically conditioned universe of perception." p. 40

THE SECRET OF LIGHT
Walter Russell:

"Sensation is the electrical awareness of motion simulating the spiritual QUALITIES of the One Idea by creating imaged QUANTITIES of separate forms which seem to have substance."

THE TIGER'S FANG, 2nd edition:

"Perception is the electrical awareness of motion simulating the spiritual qualities of God, who creates imaged qualities of separate forms which seem to have material substance." p. 40

Lest we think the Universe has no sense of humor, it appears the master literary pirate tipped his hand. In an absolutely wonderful twist of irony, in his quote below Twitchell ends up describing himself. Caveat emptor!

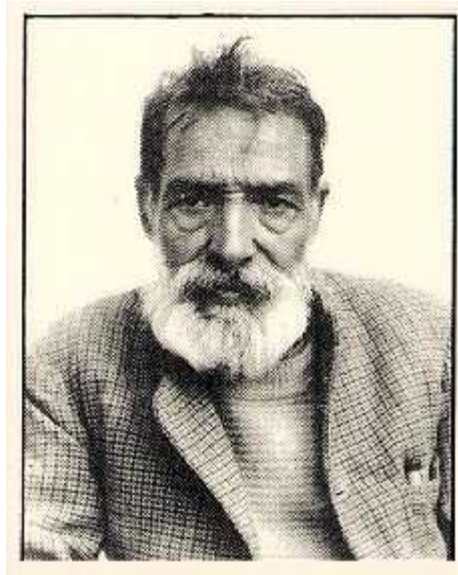
--Twitchell on the "fakers" who unethically steal the words and experiences of others:--

"All philosophers, preachers, and sages who have the odor of philosophy, religion, and knowledge are not any of these. They are pretenders, those who pretend to have undergone the profound experiences of God; the faker drawing on experiences of real mystics, and the thieving of turns of speech and materials in the hope of conveying a conviction of genuineness."

-- Paul Twitchell from THE TIGER'S FANG, pg. 51 --

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Faqir Chand: The Unknowing Sage



Excerpted with permission from the book by David C. Lane

[Part 1](#)

[Part 2](#)

[Part 3](#)

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Exposing Cults: When the Skeptical Mind Confronts the Mystical

by Professor David C. Lane

- [Chapter One](#) The Paradox of Da Free John
 - [Chapter Four](#) The J.R. Controversy
 - [Chapter Six](#) The Himalayan Connection
 - [Chapter Nine](#) Inner Visions and Running Trains
 - [Chapter Ten](#) The Hierarchical Structure of Religions Visions
 - [Chapter Twelve](#) The Spiritual Crucible
-

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Photo Album

- [Julian Johnson](#) author of Path of the Masters
 - [Sawan Singh](#) was Julian Johnson's teacher
 - [Paul Twitchell and Kirpal Singh](#)
 - [Paul Twitchell and Anya Foos-Grabber](#)
 - [Darwin Gross](#) Deposed 2nd Eck Master
 - [Harold Klemp](#) present day Mahanta/Living Eck Master
- Hosting by [WebRing](#).



This is posted again for those that may have missed it the first time. It is written from the viewpoint of the higher self addressing the human state of consciousness. The book, **The Impersonal Life** (DeVorss & Co.) was written around 1916 by Joseph S. Benner. The chapter on Masters brings up many interesting points.

MASTERS

from The Impersonal Life

You, who are still holding to the idea, taught in various teachings, that I will provide a "Master" or Divine Teacher for each aspirant towards union with Me, hear My Words.

It is true I have permitted you in the past to delve into all kinds of mystical and occult books and teachings, encouraging your secret desire to acquire the powers necessary to attain this union extolled in such teachings, even to the extent of quickening in you some slight consciousness of the possession of such powers.

I have even permitted the belief that by practicing certain exercises, breathing in a certain way, and saying certain mantras, you might attract to you a "Master" from the unseen, who would become your teacher and help you to prepare for certain initiations that would admit you into an advanced degree in some secret order in the inner planes of existence, where much of My Divine Wisdom would be opened up to you.

I have not only permitted these things, but, if you can see it, it was I who led you to these books, inspired in you such desire, and caused such belief to find lodgment in your mind;-but not for the purpose you imagine.

* * *

Yes, I have brought you through all these teachings, desires and beliefs, trying to point out to your human mind the Forces I use to bring into expression My Divine Idea.

I have portrayed these Forces as heavenly Hierarchies, and that your human intellect might the better comprehend, I pictured them as Angels or Divine Beings, Impersonal agents or executors of My Will, engaged in the process of bringing into expression My Idea that was in the beginning.

But you did not understand.

Your human intellect, enamored of the possibility of meeting and communing with one of these beings, was blind to the true nature of the teachings, and so led you to

personalize Them, and began to long for Their appearance in your life, imagining that They are interested in your human affairs, and that by living in accordance with certain rules set down in certain teachings, you could propitiate Them so They would help you to gain Nirvana or Immortality.

* * *

Now I have purposely permitted you to indulge yourself with such delusions, letting you long and pray, and strive earnestly to obey all the instructions given; even leading you on, sometimes, by giving you glimpses, in self-induced visions and dreams of ideal beings, which I permitted you to believe were such "Masters."

I may even have caused to open in you certain faculties, which make it possible for you to sense the presence of personalities that have passed into the spirit side of life, and who have been attracted by your desires and seek to fulfill the part of Master and Guide to you. Now the time has come for you to know that such beings are not Masters, also that Divine Beings do not call themselves Masters; that I, and I alone, your own Real Self, AM the only Master for you now, and until you are able to know Me also in your brother.

* * *

That any being, either in human or spirit form, that presents himself to your consciousness and claims to be a Master, or who permits you to call him Master, is nothing more nor less a personality, the same as yours, and therefore is not Divine, as your human mind understands that term, despite the many wonderful "truths" he may utter, and the "Marvelous" things he may do.

Just so long as your human mind seeks or worships the idea of a Master in any other being, no matter how lofty or sacred he may seem to you, just so long will you be fed with such ideas; until, verily, I may perhaps, permit you to meet and commune with such a "Master."

If that privilege is vouchsafed you, it will be only in order to hasten your awakening and your consequent disillusionment, when you will learn that "Master" is indeed but a personality, even though far more advanced in awakening than you, but still a personality - and not the Divine One your innermost Soul is yearning for you to know.

For I feed you with every idea that will operate to teach you the reality back of the seeming, and if I lead you on to apparent deception and loss of faith in all human and even Divine perfection, it is only to enable you the more clearly to distinguish between the substance and the shadow, and to prepare you for that far higher Ideal

I am waiting to picture to you.

* * *

You can rise in your human personality only to the ideal your human mind is capable of conceiving. Through Desire I cause My will to manifest in you, and through Desire I perform many wondrous works. If you doubt this you need only to apply the Key;

To think of a Master is to create one.

This idea of a Master, by your thinking, becomes what you desire and imagine a master to be.

In other words, by your thinking you build around this idea, all the qualities you imagine a master possesses. Your human mind, through Desire, through aspiration, through worship, must needs create these qualities in some imaginary being, who is still a personality, for you cannot as yet conceive of an Impersonal being.

Therefore, according to the intensity of your desire and thinking, must this idea sooner or later come into actual manifestation., either by attracting to you such a personality in the flesh, or one entitized in the realm of visions and dreams.

* * *

As your human mind is constituted, it at certain times thinks it needs a Master, one to whom it can turn with its human trials and problems for explanation and advice, thinking life's problems can be settled that way. If I draw to you one who fails you or deceives you and throws you back finally upon Me, your own Self, discouraged, disillusioned and humiliated, it is only that perhaps then you will be ready to turn to Me within, and will listen to My Voice, which all these years has been speaking to you, but to which your proud and egoistic mind has not deigned to listen.

You who have not yet had this experience, who have not yet met the Master of your aspirations, either in human or spirit form; you, within whom My Words have failed to awaken a quickening response to their truth, - for you I have in store certain experiences which will surely lead you to Me later on, and then you will be brought to know that I AM the Master, the inspiring Idea back of and within every thought of and every aspiration towards a Master that enters your mind, whether coming from within or without.

* * *

It is taught, "When the pupil is ready the Master appears." And this is true in a sense; but not as you have interpreted it.

Your secret desire for a Master will bring him to you, but only when I have prepared you for such an appearance. But such will be only an appearance of a Master. The true Master or Teacher, when He appears, you may never recognize; for He may be hidden in an interesting friend, a business associate, your next door neighbor, or in your own wife or husband or child.

You, who have risen above Desire, you who no longer seek a Master or Teacher, or even Me, but are abiding alone in the faith of My Eternal Presence and Promise, - for you I have in store a meeting and a communion, which will bring to your Soul such joy and blessings as your human mind is incapable of conceiving.

Fear not; this mystery will be revealed unto you - if you truly wish to know My Meaning.

Until then, why, in your seeking, be satisfied with anything short of the Highest?

Why seek in human or spirit teacher, guide, master, or angel, for the necessarily limited manifestation of My Perfection, when you can come directly to Me, God within you, the Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, the Inspiring Idea back of and within All manifestations?

* * *

As I AM in You, even as I AM in any you seek, and as all the Wisdom, all the Power and all the Love they possess come only from Me, why not now come to Me, and let Me prepare you also so I can express My All through You?

You are a human personality, yet You are Divine and therefore Perfect.

The first of these truths you believe, the latter you do not believe.

Yet both are true. - That is the mystery.

You are just what you think You are.

One or the other, which are you? - Or both?

You are One with Me. I AM in You, in Your human personality, in Your body, mind and intellect. I AM in every cell of Your body, in every attribute of Your mind, in every faculty of Your intellect. I AM the Soul, the active Principle of each. You are in Me. You are a Cell of my Body; You are an Attribute of My Mind; You are a Faculty of My Intellect. You are a part of Me, yet You are I, My Self. We are One, and

always have been.

* * *

This idea of a Master I brought to your mind's attention was only to lead you to and prepare you for this Idea of Me, your Impersonal Self, an Angel of Light, a Radiation of My Being, your own Divine Lord and Master, within.

Yes, I, your Divine Self, AM the Master your Soul has caused you to seek, and when you do find Me, and know I AM your Self, then will you in your human consciousness gladly become My Disciple, will lovingly wait upon Me, and will be concerned only that you faithfully serve Me, both within yourself and within your fellow men. And then you understand why only "One is your Master"

For I dwell in all men and AM their One and Only Self. Through all men I AM ever calling to you and trying to reach and impress your human consciousness. As I AM continually teaching you, not only through every avenue needed at the time, I have many ways of reaching your consciousness and utilize all to bring you to a realization of My Meaning.

I speak with many voices - with the voice of all human emotions, passions and desires. I speak with Nature's voice, with the voice of Experience, even with the voice of human knowledge.

Yes, these are all My Voice, which I use Impersonally to express to you the one fact, that I AM in All and that I AM All. What this voice says, in Its thousand ways, is that you, too, are part of this All, and that I AM in you, waiting for your recognition of Me and your conscious cooperation in the expression of My Idea of Impersonal Perfection on earth, even as It is expressing in Heaven.

When this recognition comes, and then only, are you ready to meet and know a real Master. Then and then only will you realize why I, your own Impersonal Self can be and AM the only possible Master of your human personality.

Then also will you understand why in your personal, separate consciousness you could never recognize or know a real Master should you meet Him in a physical body - that not until you are able to enter into My Consciousness within you and within Him, He would not exist to you other than perhaps as a kind and helpful friend or teacher.

* * *

When you have attained to that Consciousness, then will you be worthy and qualified to know and commune with your fellows in the Great Brotherhood of the

Spirit, Those who have mastered self and Who live only to help their younger brothers also to find the Divine One within.

If a being should come into your life who seemed to you Divine and who let you think or call him a Master, he is not yet wholly Impersonal. Such a one might be a master-man, but he could not be the Divine One your Soul yearns to serve.

Perhaps you should be satisfied to have such a one for a Master, even if he were not wholly Impersonal. If so, then I would hereafter bring you to a realization of his personal imperfections by a constant comparison with My Impersonal Perfection; until you would finally turn and come to Me in complete abandon, acknowledging Me and My Impersonality as the only Model and Ideal, and as the true Cause which inspired your long search without for My Perfection, that could be found only within, hidden deep within your own soul.

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Welcome Friends!

My name is Sharon. I was a member of Eckankar, the "Religion of Light and Sound", for almost 15 years. I was a "good" eckist, and always trying to be a better one...

Eckankar is not what it claims to be. Eckankar is a pseudo-religion created by Paul Twitchell, an intelligent man who could have perhaps done some good in the world if he'd wanted to. I will be presenting clear evidence here which shows that Paul Twitchell's intention was to set up a cult with himself as "Godman."

Thousands of people have left Eckankar. Some ex-eckists are speaking out on the internet and in the "real" world, but many are silent, still trying to heal from the spiritual and psychological damage inflicted on the minds, hearts, and souls by Eckankar.

Leaving a cult is not as simple as not going to church on Sunday. Eckankar's subtle mind-control methods are effective. Only someone who's been through it really can understand. When we were eckists, we seemed to be thinking clearly and in control of our lives. Only after leaving Eckankar did our minds begin to clear, and it doesn't happen overnight. For some ex-eckists, the lingering effects of mind-control can hang like a shadow over your heart and mind for many years.

Don't be lured into this cult until you've investigated the whole truth from both ex-eckists and cult experts, and use the mind your Creator gave you to make a rational decision.

The teachings of Eckankar are stolen and plagiarized truths, which are freely given elsewhere, with no strings attached, by TRUE spiritual giants. Eckankar may tell you that it is the original, primal religion...but beware...Eckankar lies.

Please follow the links below...your personal relationship with Spirit is too important to buy into something blindly... You don't need a connection with any kind of "master," especially the imaginary and/or evil self-proclaimed "masters" of Eckankar.

God is in your heart, and God's love and grace are given freely to all who desire it.

Hugs.....from Sharon P.S. Thank you for your patience...I'm still under construction, and learning a little about HTML...it's not that hard, really!!!

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Welcome!

To those perhaps new to the internet or this site, a short explanation might help. ARE is the usenet newsgroup alt.religion.eckankar, a public forum once naively created to allow free and open discussion of Eckankar and related topics. This did not happen, though, and shows a shameful face of an organization focused on eradicating free speech and any and all dissenting viewpoints.

A group of "priests" (higher initiates) of Eckankar, seeing the internet as a vast, untapped pool of new members, quickly moved to dominate the newsgroup and choke off any criticisms of their organization. For people claiming to be "spiritual" and seeking truth, they have an appallingly low tolerance level for opposing viewpoints, let alone documented proof.

One of their most favored tactics to silence any criticisms is to verbally attack the individual, gang up on him/her and, ideally, drive the person away. David Lane, naturally, became their favorite target. At their hands he's endured years of the lowest form of verbal abuse, intimidation and veiled threats. Mr. Lane, to his credit, never stooped to the level of the Eckists and simply presented his findings and answers to challenges in a polite and civil manner.

Thus, these pages are his responses to the charges of Eckists on the newsgroup. You, the reader, can make up your own minds as to the validity and credibility of the individuals involved. Happy reading!

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In Defense of G

Or the Use of Reason when analyzing religions like Eckankar

by David Lane

New posting

I have thoroughly enjoyed reading the postings on the Eckankar news group. There are a number of viewpoints, no doubt, on the issue of Paul Twitchell and the genuineness of his endeavor. However, it does seem that certain individuals get a bit upset by G's postings--as if he were too critical, or too judgmental, or too insightful.

Personally, I think G is on the right track. Why shouldn't we scrutinize religion with as much care as we do when buying a used car? If truth is truth (it should survive whatever petty questions we demand of it), then the more we doubt something the more whatever is the case (the reality of what is) should persist.

Now I have personally been flamed for some fifteen years because of my research on Eckankar, but I don't mind because I think critical exchange is crucial for any kind of development (intellectual, spiritual, or otherwise). I have been on the receiving end of numerous death threats, threatened lawsuits, calculated smear campaigns, and one very significant robbery (not related directly to Eckankar, in this case, but to its successful offshoot--MSIA).

Why? Because when it comes to religion we have a tendency not to want to ask deep, critical questions. Eckankar has mostly resisted my efforts to expose the true biography of their founder, Paul Twitchell.

Do you really want to follow somebody on the inner realms who consistently lies to you on the outer realms? And I don't mean white lies or socially polite lies--I mean lying. Now the reason I am so harsh on Twitchell and others like him is not because I have somehow discovered the ultimate Truth (I have not), but only because these individuals make extraordinary claims. As such, then, their claims demand (and I underline demand here) extraordinary proof.

If Twitchell and the like just claimed to be normal individuals, to be stuck like the rest of us with the human condition, then fine. Who is going to judge that? We are all, more less, frail humans. But Twitchell claims via Eckankar to be a God-man--to have access to the highest states of consciousness.

Yet, he consistently failed his own tests for a genuine master--not to mention how he failed on anybody else's scale. So he deserves to be ripped. Any guru, including my own, deserves to be critiqued. And we should not view such criticism with disdain, we should, rather, welcome it.

I fondly remember seeing a few very impressive shabd yoga gurus getting critiqued in front of large audiences. How did these genuine masters respond???? With openness, with humility, and with a listening ear. One shabd yoga master, with whom I was quite impressed, told me that "critics are our best friends--we should always keep them close to us. They teach us how to improve."

But criticizing Twitchell and Eckankar does not mean that other groups and other gurus should be exempt from such inquiries. We should investigate Radhasoami, Sant Mat, Shabd Yoga, and the like with the same intensive scrutiny. It is, to be sure, a fundamental mistake to

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Like

Easy Surf Religious Abuse

Off

Suprise Me!

Next >

think that any guru is above critical inspection.

And what will we discover by such scrutiny? We will discover that a genuine teacher shines all the more under such research. In fact, he or she will become more impressive (instead of less) when we look very closely at their life and work.

I say let's rip, shred, and lacerate the claims of would-be gurus, mystics, and prophets. I say G is right (and his name is, no doubt, perfectly reflective of the right approach).

Then, let us see what settles in the dust. In physics, they constantly criticize one another to find which theory among the competing ones explains the data best. Religion needs less believers and more skeptics.

And, what remains will have a lot more weight and a lot more juice and a lot more truth than the gurus which demand blind allegiance.

A few people have mentioned that I have not engaged directly on the newsgroup, instead just posting articles. Please feel most free to e-mail me directly, or openly critique whatever I have posted.

Written on Saturday, first week of May, in honor of G and crew who have kept the tradition of criticism alive.

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Chapter One

Re: Concerning Eckankar's legal threats against David Lane and THE MAKING OF A SPIRITUAL MOVEMENT.

In response to Mark Stone's inaccurate depiction of Eckankar's legal threats against me, I thought I would outline, in brief, how many times Eckankar has threatened legal action:

1. In 1977 when I finished my first term paper on Eckankar (and one year prior to the second and more infamous term paper, THE MAKING OF A SPIRITUAL MOVEMENT), Eckankar's attorney, Alan Nichols, stated in a personal and confidential letter that Eckankar would sue me if I published my term paper. I did publish it. (In the span of some six months there were a series of letters between Eckankar's attorney and my sister, who is also an attorney, concerning my legal rights to publish my term paper. Eckankar eventually backed off, even though they sent out world-wide memos claiming that I was part of the Kal forces from the beginning of time.

2. In 1983 when Brian Walsh (via Del Mar Press) published the first paperback version of the book, Eckankar legally threatened to sue me over the cover, which they claimed was copyright infringement [there was an Ek symbol on the cover, with a no-smoking kinda of sign over it---and partially covered up by the line going through the Ek symbol]. They were also greatly troubled by my claims about Eckankar's history. This time Eckankar was very serious and I had to get top notch representation. I was represented by Rogers and Wells, the well known legal firm. After several months of intense legal pressure (I think Eckankar even went so far as to file suit), there was an out of court settlement, which worked both to my advantage and to Eckankar's. I am not allowed to publicly comment on it since it was agreed to be kept private.

3. In the late 1980s I also received another legal threat from Eckankar; this time concerning new editions of my book.

4. In 1993 when Eckankar learned that Garland Publishing, Inc., was going to publish a hardback, library, version of my book, they sent a series of legal threats to Garland. These threats were serious enough to cause Garland to cancel publication of the book, even though it was proof-read and ready for the press and advertised in their catalogs.

Thus, Eckankar has always been legally threatening, in some form or another, the various manifestations of the book. I am fairly convinced that Eckankar will be after me again later this year, especially in light of the various internet postings.

Will keep you up to date, when new information comes in.

P.S. Concerning John-Roger Hinkins, MSIA and Insight Transformational Seminars (and co-author of Life 101, etc.), he was responsible for several death threats made against me and my associates. He was also responsible for the robbery and ransom of my brother, "Bill".

member of Eckankar, J.R. has no connection with that group today.

J.R. has never legally threatened me, even though on a nationally televised program I categorically stated that he personally robbed my home.

--

This is being posted to outline the lawsuit that was taken against Ed Gruss and Jim Peebles and Eckankar's response to THE MAKING back in the late 1970s

[\[Preface - THE EVOLUTION OF A TERM PAPER - from " The making of a spiritual movement" \]](#)

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The Story Behind The Making or How Lane Gets Rich From Criticizing Eckankar

I just recently read Mark's two recent posts (and I am assuming that he is not Mark Summers) and found them quite fun.

I have been accused of many things in the past twenty or so years, but I have never been accused of "making lots of money" and being "funded by Christian extremists."

Now it would be very heartening for me to confess that I am really quite rich and that all my work on Eckankar has been a pot of gold for me. But alas such is not the case and I have a much less romantic tale to tell. Since it may explain how and why I wrote about Eckankar in the first place, I will elaborate, in brief, about the history of my Eck investigations.

1. I first learned of Eckankar when I was 17, having seen their advertisements in the market I worked at as a "box boy."
2. From 17 to 20 I periodically read Twitchell's books at the Bodhi Tree Bookstore, which was my favorite haunt in the 1970s. I especially enjoyed reading **The Tiger's Fang** and **The Talons of Time**.
3. In the Spring of 1977 I took a class on religious cults and sects at California State University, Northridge, where I was majoring in religious studies. One of the requirements was to write a term paper on a new religious movement. I chose Eckankar as my topic of study, since they were (at that time) heavily advertising on campus.
4. I originally planned to write a 10 page term paper, but a strange coincidence occurred. I was visiting Del Mar (a beautiful town on the Pacific Ocean, where Paul and Gail lived just prior to his death) and happened into a health food store entitled "Kirpal's." Since I knew the owner must be a follower of the late Sant Kirpal Singh, we got in a discussion about shabd yoga in general. He then informed me that Paul Twitchell, founder of Eckankar, was once a follower of his guru. I was curious, since I was in the process of writing my term paper. From that moment on I decided to do some more extensive research on Twitchell's background.
5. I then read almost every piece of literature I could find on Eckankar; this lead me to several key contacts, outstanding among them was Dr. John Sutphin, a Professor of Philosophy and a former Eckankar member, who provided me with a number of excellent leads. I then proceeded to look at Twitchell's early life and his extensive plagiarism.
6. As the semester was coming to an end, I had to present my findings to my Professor. He was duly impressed, as was Jim Peebles (an Eckankar member at the time and my classmate), who was also writing a paper and who later left the group (he also got sued, by the way, the next year by Eckankar).
7. I was pretty naive, so I sent a copy of the report to Eckankar. Subsequently, I received a letter from one of their attorneys (Nichols), who threatened to sue me if I ever published my study.



8. This, naturally, struck my curiosity (please keep in mind that I come from a family of attorneys--my father was a prominent attorney in Los Angeles, and my sister is currently a managing partner of a New York firm). Hence, I was not frightened by Eckankar's legal threats.

9. That following year (1977/1978) I took an independent study class in religious studies at CSUN so that I could do a more thorough term paper on Eckankar's history.

10. This effort led to a number of interesting contacts: Camille Ballowe--Twitchell's first wife; Brad Steiger--Twitchell's first biographer; Dr. Louis Bluth--Twitchell's personal doctor and eventual President of Eckankar; Ed Pecen--Twitchell's confidante and personal bodyguard; and a number of key individuals within the movement. All of these individuals, to greater or lesser degrees, provided me with important documentary information about Eckankar.

11. I also spent weeks in various libraries trying to trace Twitchell's earlier articles. I remember spending 10 hour days in the L.A. public library, UCLA, and other places, researching Twitchell's various pen names, and various articles (many of these findings I have not included in the present book). Eventually, **Orion Magazine**--which is now defunct--sent me all the original back issues where Twitchell's byline appeared. I also talked with Roy Eugene Davis and the former Editor of the magazine, who once remarked that Twitchell was a fairly awful writer (grammar/spelling mistakes; I never included this in the book, since I am not exempt from the same criticism).

12. My phone bill was extraordinarily high for a twenty year old. It was about two hundred to three hundred dollars a month, I remember (my mother surely remembers). I had a very long talk with a number of Twitchell's associates, including Iverlet, Ballowe, and others.

13. In the Spring of 1978 I finally finished the manuscript, which was originally called **The Making of a Cult**---but was later switched on the advice of Neil Tessler to **The Making of a Spiritual Movement**. I turned in for my class credit; it was about 160+ pages, I believe. 14. At that time the **Spiritual Counterfeits Project** in Berkeley contacted me via Jim Peebles (who was clearly upset with Eckankar); they wanted to utilize my research. I agreed, but wrote a letter to them clearly stating that I did not agree with their slanted approach. All of them at the time were highly professional and their journal still stands as one of the best pieces ever done on a cult from a biased Christian perspective.

15. That summer (1978) I was asked by Professor Mark Juergensmeyer (who was at Berkeley at that time, but who is now a Professor of Sociology at U.C. Santa Barbara) to be his research assistant in India for a book he was doing on the Radhasoamis. During that trip in the summer, my manuscript was circulated informally by a number of Eckists. Eventually one Eckist in Oregon got a hold of it and xeroxed hundreds of copies of it. I got a flood of mail--also because of my address being printed in SCP.

16. Thus for the first two years of its existence, the manuscript was circulated in a photocopied fashion. However, I met Brian Walsh in 1979 at the GTU (he was a graduate student in Consciousness Studies at JFK); he was newly initiated by

Darshan Singh, Kirpal's son; I was newly initiated by Charan Singh (I was initiated in November of 1978--months after I wrote the second version of my Eckankar expose). We became fast friends and he wanted to publish the manuscript, since he had once been attracted to Eckankar and felt that the information should be available to the unsuspecting public.

17. I agreed and Brian put up about 200 bucks or so and published a xeroxed, revised, version of the manuscript; it sold out very quickly. However, since Brian was selling near to costs, no profit was made, except that he could do another larger printing--which he did.

18. In the meantime I was working on my MA at GTU in Berkeley and tried to get a few major publishers interested in the book. Each of them found the work interesting but were scared off by Eckankar's legal threats (a decade later, Garland Publishing agreed to do the manuscript, but had to back off due to the persisting legal threats of Eckankar--it is for that reason that it was advertised by Garland in their catalogs).

19. In 1982 I moved to Del Mar, California. Brian Walsh moved there shortly after me. In 1983 he wanted to publish a legitimate paperback version of the book. He put up 3000 dollars and started **Del Mar Press**--we both agreed to share the work and eventually start a journal (which we did), called **Understanding Cults**.

20. 1000 copies of the Making of a Spiritual Movement were published and the book sold steadily for two years, eventually exhausting its initial print run. (By the way, Brian gave 100+ copies for free to an interested Eckist in Lagos, Nigeria).

21. Concerning the profits that were garnered from that print run, Brian Walsh did not make his money back; indeed, he lost a couple of thousand, because we kept giving free copies away to various countries who could not afford to pay the taxes, etc.

22. In 1983 I was contacted by defectors of John-Roger Hinkins' movement; Brian and I started Understanding Cults; the first issue was devoted to J.R.

23. As is pretty well known, I was robbed by John-Roger personally on October 5, 1984; my home/office was completely ransacked and all of my research work (plus names and addresses to our mailing list) were stolen.

24. During the next year Eckankar's international headquarters received a package of stolen goods (items which were taken from my home); Eckankar very swiftly and very professionally sent the materials back to me, knowing that they were being used as a middle-man (J.R. wrongly assumed that I would blame Eckankar for the robbery if they somehow used the stolen material; Eckankar was wiser than that and immediately handed over the materials, which had--by the way--J.R.'s handwriting all over the papers.).

25. We did five more issues of UCSM and closed operations. Why? Because I lost too much money, got tired of repeated death threats, and had to finish my Ph.D. at UCSD.

26. However, there were still lots of people interested in the book, so I (Walsh had moved from Del Mar in the late 80s) published enlarged versions of the manuscript in limited print runs.

27. Finally, in 1992 I contacted **Garland Publishing** about the possibility of publishing the book in new, slightly revised version. I signed a contract and they advertised the book. However, as people must know by now, Eckankar legally threatened Garland over the book. Eventually, Garland had to back down since they did not want to get into a prolonged legal battle--especially when the book was not going to make them much money anyways.

28. Thus I decided to "reactivate" Del Mar Press (it was dying a very slow death in the early 90s) so that I could publish a paperback version of Making. It cost about 4,000 to do one thousand copies (including, of course, laser costs, etc.). I put the money up from my teaching salary (I am a tenured professor of philosophy at Mount San Antonio College) and decided to charge 15 bucks a piece for Making so that any extra money could be channeled back into Del Mar Press--finally trying to make it stand on its own legs without me or others infusing money into it.

29. Although it is a bit embarrassing (and does not reflect well on Walsh's or mine's business acumen), Del Mar Press has never made a profit; indeed, I estimate that it has lost several thousand dollars in the past decade. This is due to a number of reasons, but primarily because Walsh and I never really intended to make money. We simply wanted to have a means to get certain information available to the public. Moreover, it was fun putting the whole operation together.

30. As we move into the mid-1990s, I have put most of my other books with significant publishing firms (Garland Publishing has published THE RADHASOAMI TRADITION and EXPOSING CULTS--which is due out in August of this year); I am currently working on SPOOKY ACTION AT A DISTANCE: EINSTEIN'S ARGUMENT WITH NIELS BOHR AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF QUANTUM THEORY with Aaron Talsky (Harvard University; U.C. Irvine). It should be ready for the publisher in Fall of this year.

But to underline Mark's claim, I am sorry to report that I have not made any profit on the Eckankar materials.

However, I have thoroughly enjoyed myself and I think it is a nice impression that Mark leaves when he claims that I have made lots of money. Perhaps I should not have written the preceding, since then my fellow newsgroup readers will think that I live in a big house on the beach (I live in an apartment); that I own an expensive car (I drive a 88 Nissan Sentra--with about 140,000 miles on it); that I hang with the stars in Hollywood and go to the best restaurants (being personally a strict vegetarian, my options are limited); that I am an avid fundamentalist Christian (actually I was raised Roman Catholic, having attended their schools for some 12 years and having taught in the same for five years [Concerning my own religious heritage, I was initiated by the late Maharaj Charan Singh of Radhasoami Satsang Beas in November 1978]).

But I have to burst Mark's high estimation of me.

Presently I teach five classes a semester (ranging from Introduction to Philosophy; Introduction to Major World Religions; and Introduction to Sociology) and surf two to three times a week.

But, Mark, you could change my financial status and confirm your suspicion of me very quickly. Just buy lots of copies of THE RADHASOAMI TRADITION from Garland and they will send me a larger royalty check. Best not to bother with Del Mar Press, since we have never

made money from that.

I don't know about the "handlers" you claim I am in contact with. Give me their names and addresses; maybe they can buy me the new surfboard I want.

Keep up the shredding, however. I don't mind, especially when you make me out to be a financial wizard!

Excerpted from a letter by Dr. Louis Bluth, former President of Eckankar, one-time follower of Sawan Singh, and Paul Twitchell's personal doctor when the Eck leader died in 1971:

Date: June 19, 1980

My wife and I opened the first Eck class in Sun City, Cal. I personally treated Paul [Twitchell] many times and was the main speaker in Cincinnati when he passed away. Paul was a sincere student in the beginning and I considered him honest. Problems between him and his wife Gail led him to believe she was going to leave him and he desperately wanted to keep her. So when she demanded more money and better living, he started to write things and copy from other books. He [Paul Twitchell] borrowed my books on Radha Soami and copied a large share from them. I helped him write the Herb book and went to Riverside University and took Sanskrit, so basically much of the material is good because it is copied. I confronted him [Paul Twitchell] with what he had done and his answer was "since the author the book said it better than I could I copied it." The trouble is that he never gave anyone credit as to where he got it.

As far as Darwin {Gross} is concerned, my opinion is that he is a fake as a Master. I don't think that a Master would divorce his wife and seek many other female companions.

Signed:

Louis Bluth, M.D.

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Chapter One

Re: Concerning Eckankar's legal threats against David Lane and THE MAKING OF A SPIRITUAL MOVEMENT.

In response to Mark Stone's inaccurate depiction of Eckankar's legal threats against me, I thought I would outline, in brief, how many times Eckankar has threatened legal action:

1. In 1977 when I finished my first term paper on Eckankar (and one year prior to the second and more infamous term paper, THE MAKING OF A SPIRITUAL MOVEMENT), Eckankar's attorney, Alan Nichols, stated in a personal and confidential letter that Eckankar would sue me if I published my term paper. I did publish it. (In the span of some six months there were a series of letters between Eckankar's attorney and my sister, who is also an attorney, concerning my legal rights to publish my term paper. Eckankar eventually backed off, even though they sent out world-wide memos claiming that I was part of the Kal forces from the beginning of time.

2. In 1983 when Brian Walsh (via Del Mar Press) published the first paperback version of the book, Eckankar legally threatened to sue me over the cover, which they claimed was copyright infringement [there was an Ek symbol on the cover, with a no-smoking kinda of sign over it---and partially covered up by the line going through the Ek symbol]. They were also greatly troubled by my claims about Eckankar's history. This time Eckankar was very serious and I had to get top notch representation. I was represented by Rogers and Wells, the well known legal firm. After several months of intense legal pressure (I think Eckankar even went so far as to file suit), there was an out of court settlement, which worked both to my advantage and to Eckankar's. I am not allowed to publicly comment on it since it was agreed to be kept private.

3. In the late 1980s I also received another legal threat from Eckankar; this time concerning new editions of my book.

4. In 1993 when Eckankar learned that Garland Publishing, Inc., was going to publish a hardback, library, version of my book, they sent a series of legal threats to Garland. These threats were serious enough to cause Garland to cancel publication of the book, even though it was proof-read and ready for the press and advertised in their catalogs.

Thus, Eckankar has always been legally threatening, in some form or another, the various manifestations of the book. I am fairly convinced that Eckankar will be after me again later this year, especially in light of the various internet postings.

Will keep you up to date, when new information comes in.

P.S. Concerning John-Roger Hinkins, MSIA and Insight Transformational Seminars (and co-author of Life 101, etc.), he was responsible for several death threats made against me and my associates. He was also responsible for the robbery and ransom of my brother, Mark Stone.

member of Eckankar, J.R. has no connection with that group today.

J.R. has never legally threatened me, even though on a nationally televised program I categorically stated that he personally robbed my home.

--

This is being posted to outline the lawsuit that was taken against Ed Gruss and Jim Peebles and Eckankar's response to THE MAKING back in the late 1970s

[\[Preface - THE EVOLUTION OF A TERM PAPER - from " The making of a spiritual movement" \]](#)

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The Validity of Eckankar Masters

Or How I Found Rebazar Tarzs on a Surf Trip to Baja

I think Johnson's comments on occultation are right on the mark. By claiming that a master such as Rebazar Tarzs still resides in the Himalayan mountains adds an incredible charm to the whole subject--it also provides the logical possibility that a would-be Eckist (not dissimilar, I should add, to the would-be SRF member and his relation with Babaji) can directly encounter Rebazar Tarzs right now.

However, readers on this group must certainly be aware that Rebazar Tarzs, as such, does not exist. He is, as we have stated repeatedly, a cover name for a whole series of gurus--which one, of course, depends upon Twitchell's writing mood at the time (to confirm this, just listen to Paul's early tapes on Rebazar--in one instance he completely forgets who Rebazar Tarzs is until an audience member refreshes his memory; apparently Twitchell was writing so swiftly he started forgetting who he was inventing and naming)

Now I am not absolutely certain how Twitchell came up with the name "Rebazar Tarzs" (a friend of mine, Brian Walsh, claims that it is derived from a similar sounding name in a Tibetan Yoga book), but I have one very sneaky suspicion.

As I often do I go down to Baja for surfing trips. A couple of years ago as I was heading down south to surf a relatively secluded spot called "Quatro (sp.) casas" (four houses), I noticed to my amazement a highway sign which said "Rebasar Tars". Now I should add that Twitchell used to live in San Diego and Del Mar (both very close to the Baja border). I would not put it past the Twitch to have simply coined the name from one of his trips (with Gail presumably) to Baja.

Now if this is too outrageous, just think of the following names: "Jagat Ho" (a cross between "Jagat Singh"--the late Beas master--and a famous cracker "Hi Ho"?????).

"Gakko"--the master who brought the true teachings from the planet Venus. Hmm, reminds me of "Gekko" (since this was prior to the star on the soap opera, General Hospital, I am assuming that this is a cross between some master and some creature that hangs on ceilings).

And how about "Fubbi Quantz" (my personal favorite). Seems partially derived from a popular Disney movie, if I am not mistaken ("Son of Flubber". . . which leads to Flubby. . . which leads to Fubbi--I am just making these connections as I go along).

"Yaubl Sacabi"--- (if my pronunciation of the first name is correct, this is the Twitch's first honest name--- "Ya Bull" (or, "yes this a bull"---but since nobody is going to check these people out historically, I should just keep coming up with off-the-wall names; it adds lure, it adds mystery, it adds money.)

Now all of the preceding should not be cited seriously, but it does make you begin to wonder.

Where did Twitchell come up with these names? I have my own answer--from a vivid imagination, which was fueled by his extensive reading, his criss-cross travel, and his proclivity for misspelling and mis-dating historical names. Couple this with the desire to coverup, mislead, and to mystify

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Even Twitchell's spiritual name "Peddar Zaskq" has the earmarks of a word game; "Dap Ren"--- or "Wah Z" (sound like the grand "Wah Zoo").

I don't mean to be disrespectful. However, my sense is that it was exactly Twitchell's intention to be consciously disrespectful (to history, to dates, to books, to facts) which has mislead all of us to believe that Eckankar is more than what most outsiders suspect it is.

Now the counterargument is that we begin to have visions of Rebazar. Well, we been through this before---anybody can have visions of anybody whatsoever (even if the characters are not historically real or genuine residents of the astral plane).

[K. Paul Johnson interjects: Rebazar in Spanish means to exceed, or in reference to driving, to pass. Tars I can't find in the dictionary. But the sign presumably instructs one about passing lanes or something similar. BTW that's "cuatro."]

Questioning the Legitimacy of Twitchellian History - with regard to the coining of new names for previous Eck Masters.

Mark S. writes that he is upset with my questioning of the "spiritual names" for previous (and current) Eck Masters. He further mentions that he would not discuss with me his inner experiences with such beings because I have crossed the line in terms of objectivity.

Now Mark is actually right on the mark here (no pun intended). I have crossed the line of objectivity since I really don't know (absolutely) where Twitchell came up with these incredible (and I use incredible here consciously--that is, not believable) sounding names.

And when I do use my objective, research oriented method I have come across a severe problem. Most of these characters cannot be verified historically. Indeed, when I went to India to find out if some of these gurus (like Rebazar and Sudar) really did exist, as claimed by Twitchell and others in Eckankar, I found out to my dismay that there was no evidence whatsoever for them. Thus, what is a researcher to do????

Well, he/she can simply accept Twitchell's testimony, but there's a catch if he or she does that. Almost everything else Twitchell has stated has turned out to be either false (like his birthdate) or a cover-up (e.g., his association with Kirpal Singh, L. Ron Hubbard, etc.).

Thus, when it comes to the alleged facticity of the **Vairagi** masters, the researcher has to step outside the bounds of objectivity. Indeed, every Eckist I know has to. Why? How else can you believe Twitchellian history when most of it falls beyond the realm of empirical confirmation.

Yet, the Eckist sometimes wants it both ways. They want the researcher to be objective, value-free, etc. (most of which, of course, is impossible anyways) when it comes to evaluating the truth claims of their respective religion. However, when the researcher asks them to be objective about the origins of their group, their leader, their genealogical connections, it is occasionally argued that "empiricism" is limited and that Eck deals with things far beyond the rational mind.

A simple question arises in my mind. If Rebazar and Sudar and Fubbi and Gakko really did exist, why is it that only Paul Twitchell talks about them???? (I am not talking about inner visions and the like here). It is Twitchell who has access to them. It is Twitchell who knows their names. It is also Twitchell who has systematically lied about almost every important detail in his life. To protect his family??? I think not; it was very family that said he was a liar. Even Twitchell' first

wife informed me that Twitchell had a tendency to tell yarns (a polite terms for "lying").

So if the Twitch has this fairly bad habit of lying and he is the first guy to talk about a five hundred year old Tibetan monk and nobody either in Tibet or India has heard of the guy, what is the researcher to do????

Well, my hunch is that Twitch just made the names up. Now this may seem non-objective, but I ask the internet readers to do the necessary empirical research (go to India, go to Tibet), and find the evidence for Rebazar Tarzs or Twitchell's version of Sudar Singh.

I don't mind being wrong. Indeed, it would be quite fun to meet Rebazar. It would be great to add Sudar to my shabd yoga genealogical tree.

But all I hear is that some of these beings can only be contacted on the inner planes. They don't appear to skeptics (just like psychics cannot work correctly when a magician is watching them).

Mark, I genuinely don't mind being wrong. I think it is a worthy task for you to gather solid evidence for Rebazar Tarzs and crew. (I hasten to repeat that I am not asking for testimonies of others inner experiences--I have already commented on the unreliability of that already in two pieces: The Politics of Mysticism and the Kirpal Statistic).

If I am wrong, I will personally go to Tibet and apologize to Rebazar, providing of course that the Chinese government doesn't mind a foreigner talking to one of their elders.

Concerning "Wah Z", I personally didn't mean anything offensive by it. Maybe I am just too jaded. Because even when Eckankar claimed that I was a reincarnation of Kal I didn't get offended. I sort thought of it as a backside compliment. I mean I know they must have been very taken aback when they tried to sue me and my sister who is an attorney wrote them back a very stern response.

Why were they taken aback? My sister's initials are: KAL (Kim A. Lane). Hmmm.....

On a more serious note, I think this whole business of names and the like should be more thoroughly investigated.

I would like to see somebody do the kind of research that Johnson has done on the Theosophical masters. It is very instructive. Check out his latest book which is coming out from SUNY. It is indicative of what needs to be done more thoroughly in Eckankar.

Keep ripping, Mark.

dave

Making fun of the names of Eckankar Masters: Volume Two

Mark informs me that he is upset with me making fun of the various names of Eck Masters, such as Fubbi Quantz, Yaubl Sacabi, Rebazar Tarz, Jagat Ho, Gakko, Wah Z, Peddar Zaskq, and the like.

However, I did at one time take these names seriously; indeed so seriously that I did

research here in America, Europe, and India to find out if these characters actually did exist (now I mean "exist" in a earthly, historical--non astral/dream--sense).

To my chagrin I found out that there was no historical evidence for their existence, except in a few cases as composite cover-names for earlier teachers in history. Due to this I began to seriously doubt Twitchell's "Vairagi" masters.

By understanding how Twitchell profusely plagiarized and made up history, I got a much better insight into the ontological status of these Eck Masters. This naturally led me to doubt Gakko and his Venus genealogy (he came from the city of Retz on the planet Venus, according to Twitchell).

Thus, I think it is perfectly appropriate to wonder aloud where Twitchell came up with these names. When I began to use a sense of humor--that is, I began to play word games--I realized that Twitchell just made the names up whenever it became convenient (whether to hide his past or make up a richer sounding mythology).

Now this offends Eckists like Mark, since it no doubt calls into question the veracity of the Eckankar enterprise. I understand how my elasticity and my questioning and my humor could be offensive to devout believers.

But I find Twitchell's myth-making, from a purely factual and historical perspective, much more offensive. He has systematically misled his readers at almost every turn about the truthfulness of his accounts, the accuracy of his biography, and the genuineness of his presentation.

Yet, I hear repeatedly that Eckankar has gone "beyond" that. We are dealing with Sri Harold Klemp (keep in mind that the "Sri" is simply an Indian honorific like "Mr." or "Sir"--but it sounds much more romantic when we use the Indian term that almost nobody understands).

Well, Klemp has bought into the Eckankar enterprise and yet knows much more than his following does about the nefarious activities of his predecessors, Paul and Darwin.

However, misguided Eckists need not fear, for Klemp has directed Eckankar into a new direction, one which has paranoia as a cornerstone. I don't think it is coincidental that the number of Eckists who have had "bad" astral experiences has increased steadily since Harold Klemp published his article, "Methods of the Black Magician," in the Winter 1983 issue of **The Mystic World**. In 1987 alone I have talked with more than ten Eckists who have reported terrifying experiences of "losing" one's mind and mental balance; some even claim to be haunted by internal beings and powers taking away the inner recesses of their personality. A close look at the following passages from Klemp's article shows clearly where these Eckists are getting their fears:

"The black magician depends upon simple, inexperienced people to provoke worship of the personality, for in ignorance is his power. Signs of one in whom the Kal power is stronger than the ECK are several, including: 1) Show him money and he wonders how to get it from you, 2) make peace in your household and he will try to break it up and 3) if you say, "This is Truth," he tries to prove it is not so.

"The potential for a fall from grace is a real danger when the lust for power thrusts itself into the foreground. No matter what high station anyone gets in his journey to God, he can end up a fallen star unless he has truly seen the SUGMAD. . .

"A black magician has a degree of knowledge as to how invisible energies split from the Audible Life Current, but he bends them toward darkness and destruction.

"With power to invade dreams, he can bring terror through nightmares. The dreamer quakes, wondering what has suddenly unbalanced the delicate scale in his affairs. Monsters appear, forces, tear at the Astral body and strange, awful phenomena confront him.

"Fear grows and, with it, the disarming influence of the magician steals over the victim. In the initial phase he scatters the initiate's serenity so as to control the mind. Craving raw power, the magician cares not a wit for Soul's freedom. . .

"To survive a psychic attack takes several approaches: 1) A conscious closing of the emotional door against the intruder. Any photos, as well memorabilia, of a disruptive personality must be put out of the house. 2) A constant chanting of HU or the initiate's personal word. 3) An actual fight on the inner planes whereby the trespasser is driven off by marital arts or some weapon at hand. 4) Getting plenty of rest each night. . .

"People under psychic attack must make a decision whether to follow the Lord of Light and sound, or the lord of darkness. Hesitation creates a split current of energy within one. I've had reports of people who suffered heart attacks because they let their emotions pull in two different directions at the same time. Forego the Worship of Moloch. The price is too dear.

"I can help you combat the dark force by use of the might Sword of the SUGMAD-but only if you listen."

The Mystic World (Winter 1983), pages 1-2

The danger of Klemp's warning against "black magicians" (some former Eckists feel it is a thinly disguised criticism of Darwin Gross) is that it allows for impressionable Eckists to start having the very experiences he warns against.

Indeed, several of the Eckists I interviewed did not have troubles in their meditation until Klemp's warnings of the "black magician [who] creeps into his prey's life step by step. Every emotional trick is used to bind the two ever more closely together." Such mind games can only run havoc on immature and impregnable personalities. In this way, Harold Klemp has done a great harm to his following. Eckankar has been the source of tremendous mental imbalance for a growing number of devotees because its doctrines are not systematic, psychologically sound, and spiritually authentic. Rather, they are the outcome of Twitchell's schizophrenic plagiarism (he copied widely varying and contradictory teachings), which are replete with unsound (and unproven) meditation techniques, sophomoric advice about "internal beings," and dangerous spiritual counseling.

So am I presently a fan of Harold Klemp's revisionism? No, I think he is actually worse than Twitchell in some ways, since he knows how much havoc has been wrought by Paul and Darwin (and now him) on certain (not all) Eckists.

To be sure, we are all responsible to some degree to what happens to us in our religious affiliations and spiritual journeys. But, a pinto is still a pinto and the gas tank can blow up

because the car was not well engineered. Not for everybody, but for enough.

I don't have a problem with people in Eckankar--they are genuinely nice and sincere for the most part. I have a problem with a religious enterprise which does not put a warning label on its many by-products: be sure to take everything with a grain of salt, because most of what we write about is: 1) plagiarized; 2) made-up; 3) convoluted, since our founder mixed anything he read into a cosmic soup; and 4) inaccurate at times, since our founder did not cite nor carefully document his sources.

And by, the way, our founder also systematically lied about his life and his work.

But even though he lied about almost everything else in his life, the Eckankar masters are real.....

Hmm

P.S. This same criticism, I should add, holds to any religious enterprise which does not open itself up to wholesale investigation: Catholicism, certain sects of Sant Mat, etc.

Eckankar is not unique; indeed, it is much better than many of its Indian counterparts. For instance, at least Eck leaders don't kill people and beat them up and sexually molest them; Thakar Singh, the infamous head of one Shabd yoga group, is much much worse indeed.

But we need to be much more critical. We are, to be sure, more critical in buying groceries than we are in buying a religion.

The Historicity of Rebazar Tarzs and the question of Lane's biases:

In response to William, Mark, Holly, and others

The Eckankar newsgroup has been quite lively recently and it is a pleasure each day or so to read through the various posts. Very interesting and very interactive.

In this post, I would like to clarify my position on a few matters and then let's see the various responses that develop.

1. Concerning the historicity of the Eck Masters (in this article I will simply limit it to Rebazar Tarzs and Sudar Singh for focus), much of the confusion over this issue must be laid at Paul Twitchell's doorstep. Why? Because as is now well known, Paul Twitchell wrote his original manuscript, *THE TIGER'S FANG*, describing his experiences with Kirpal Singh and Sawan Singh, not Sudar Singh and Rebazar Tarzs. Indeed, in a personal letter to Kirpal Singh in the early 1960s Paul Twitchell asks Kirpal Singh for his permission to dedicate the book to the Delhi Master. Now in this book, he mentions Kirpal Singh's and Sawan Singh's names profusely. (In Twitchell's extensive correspondence with Kirpal Singh--from 1955 to 1966--he repeatedly mentions Kirpal Singh's help in getting him inner experiences; he never--not once--mentions Rebazar Tarzs or Sudar Singh.) It was only later after the growth of Eckankar that Twitchell began to delete the names of Kirpal Singh, Sawan Singh, and others from his original writings. (I have appended the chapter, *The Cover-up*, to

illustrate this fact).

Now essentially the narrative of the TIGER'S FANG remains the same. Only the names have been changed. So a fundamental question arises: is Twitchell talking about Kirpal Singh and Sawan Singh, but trying to cover-up their real identities? Or, are we to believe that Rebazar Tarzs and Sudar Singh are real entities, even though Twitchell has never even mentioned these characters before 1964?

Thus, I seriously question the historicity of Rebazar Tarzs and Sudar Singh not on the basis of my own hunches or intuitions but on the basis of a very extensive reading of Paul Twitchell's own writings. He was the one who did the cover-up; not me; he was the one that had every single mention of Kirpal Singh deleted from LETTERS TO GAIL, from THE FLUTE OF GOD, from the original INTRODUCTION TO ECKANKAR, and THE TIGER'S FANG.

Twitchell is the one who keeps his manuscript word by word, but changes only the names. He is the one who writes to Kirpal Singh for ten years calling him "My Beloved Master." He is the one who wants to dedicate THE TIGER'S FANG to Kirpal Singh, because as Twitchell himself says in his own writing (read the original "God Eaters") that Kirpal Singh, and not Rebazar Tarzs, was responsible for his elaborate inner journey.

These names, like Sudar Singh and Rebazar Tarzs, are simply cover-names. Not according to me, but according to Twitchell since he was the one who changed names. Even Dr. Bluth was informed by Paul Twitchell on several occasions that Sudar Singh was a cover name for Kirpal Singh. This part of the historical record and any researcher--biased or not--can look exclusively through Twitchell's writings and see what is happening.

This now leads me to question the authenticity of Rebazar Tarzs and Sudar Singh--not as composite cover names for previous gurus (Twitchell did indeed following Swami Premananda, Kirpal Singh, and L.Ron Hubbard), but on the basis of Twitchell's own biographies of these gurus.

Read Twitchell's descriptions of both Rebazar Tarzs and Sudar Singh closely. Not only does he contradict himself at various turns (changing not only the spelling, but the dates and locations and functions), but he also gives them the same by-line at times as previously known gurus--like Shiv Dayal Singh, like Jaimal Singh, like Sawan Singh, like Kirpal Singh.

Hence, on the basis of Twitchell's writings alone, we realize that we have composite characters (just read the plagiarized story of Sudar Singh--it is an almost exact replica of Jaimal Singh's story of how he met Shiv Dayal Singh, the founder of Radhasoami).

But Twitchell has misled a huge audience into now believing that Rebazar and Sudar are separate characters. When I went to India I did investigate the whereabouts of these people; I found nothing. But I am not saying that these people are imaginary because of my research in India; I am saying they are made-up on the basis of Twitchell's own writings. Read all of Twitchell's writings and it becomes clear that things are compressed.

For instance, I will be more than happy to fully acknowledge the existence of Rebazar and Sudar if someone can give me conclusive historical proof that these characters exist and are the very same ones talked about by Twitchell. Indeed, it would sincerely be a happy occasion for me, because I could then add them to my extensive shabd yoga guru tree.

But to claim that the only way I can verify such people is to have access to them in the astral plane or to believe in them uncritically betrays the whole notion of rationality and the genuine spiritual enterprise as well. To be sure, people also believe that Jim Morrison is still alive and doing gun runs in South Africa. We need to demand more of our spiritual mythologies; we surely demand more from our medical doctors. Why not ask for more proof of such spiritual doctors?

2). Concerning my own biases and the like, I think we are confusing the message with the medium. What we should want to know is if the question of plagiarism, coverup, and deception can be ascertained outside of any one scholar. That is, can you--as your own best guide--see the plagiarism that I have pointed out, or the cover-up, or the duplicity behind Twitchell's much maligned biography. If you can empirically verify it for yourself (get the original Orion magazine articles, go to the library and get the early editions of Twitchell's books, etc.), then you can see that no matter what biases I or anybody else may have the claims that I have made hold up. To be sure, we can argue about the ultimate interpretations of such discoveries, but can you see the plagiarism, the cover-up, the duplicity?

Here's an excerpted sample of coverup:

[Chapter 5, THE COVER-UP](#)

Can you now see why I think "Sudar Singh" and "Rebazar Tarzs" are cover-names???

Notice how the text remains the same, but the names change. If Kirpal Singh and crew were responsible for the original text, why then attribute it to two new guys who were never mentioned before 64?????

Think deeply, think critically.

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Don't Confuse Twitchell's Spiritual Schizophrenia with Spiritual Enlightenment:

A Reponse to mysti and mark

I think the biggest mistake we make when purviewing Twitchell's novelistic creation of Eckankar is the belief that he was somehow trying to "enlighten" the West, since most people couldn't "handle" the Eastern truths in their encultured format.

Now on the surface I think a Western shabd yoga master would be a refreshing change of pace. It would be nice to have a mystic, well informed in shabd yoga practice, who reflected the best of those teachings. Yet invariably those who claim this mantle (I am thinking of Twitchell, John-Roger, Jerry Mulvin, ad infinitum) reflect not Eastern wisdom, but Western capitalism.

It would be nice to see a western sound current teacher who did not: 1) charge money; 2) lived a remarkably non-selfish moral life; 3) consistently tried to serve people, instead of being served; 4) and did not want to be a guru, but was "forced" into the position (by the preceding master), and who did not make any claims whatsoever about his inner attainment.

But this is not what we find in Twitchell and crew. We do not find a Westernized version of Sant Mat, with all its merits left intact. Instead we find a "money/capital/egoistic" version of shabd yoga practice. This is especially disconcerting because in the West, where our affluence transcends the expectations of most Indians, we don't need to charge money for spirituality.

If genuine gurus don't charge money in the East, where the money imperative is much stronger, why should they charge money in the West? Jerry Mulvin, for instance, charges 100 bucks for the "Connection." Why? Because he wants to live off the disciples who are willing to fork over the cash. Why did Twitchell start Eckankar? Because he was fairly broke at the time (just ask Gail) and it was an opportunity to make more money.

I do not understand why people think that Twitchell was being benign by starting Eckankar and helping the spiritual hungry West. Remember it used to cost hundreds of dollars for personal interviews with him.

I am not against people making money, but let's not confuse a businessman with a spiritual benefactor. Twitchell was the former, Ramana Maharshi (and others like him) was the latter.

Twitchell "used" shabd yoga to make money, not to dispense divine wisdom for the needy.

I think we should raise our standards on supposed gurus, masters, and teachers. We may be ordinary, we may be unenlightened, we may be tained by maya, but that's exactly the point: we don't make extraordinary claims to the contrary. Gurus do. Therefore, let's see if they pass the test--usually a test they themselves devise.

If they don't pass, fail them, don't lamely condone it.

Most of what I hear is simply rationalizations for cosmic "smuckness." Now I happen to think Twitchell was a wonderfully interesting guy--maybe too much of a liar for his own good--but all the same quite intriguing. But that's what he was--a classic b.s.ing sort of character; he wasn't enlightened (by his scale or others).

Yet, we persist in trying to find a method to his spiritual schizophrenia (that is, his predisposition

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The method was perfectly in sync with businessmen the world over: money, and a little more money.

Now this seems so obvious (Twitchell himself has stated this on a number of occasions--just check out his earlier writings) that it is fairly amazing that we forget it.

We should shave with Occam's Razor daily, especially when it comes to the would-be claims of gurus in the West or East.

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David Lane on Karma

The issue of karma is an interesting one, since most Eck-related and shabd-related groups refer to it, especially when dealing with individuals who are "on" or "off" the path. I have often heard satsangis (in various branches--from Beas to Ruhani to Soami Bagh) refer to some good or bad action as "well that's his or her karmic fate."

On the surface of it, such statements look innocent enough; we learn about a path and everything is usually explained in terms of the law of karma, moral action/reaction, cause/effect, etc. However, there is a very curious problem in all this that is oftentimes glossed over or neglected. Even if we accept the idea of karma and that it is actually operative, we can never discern something as "not karmic" (since the implication, at least in Eastern related movements with an emphasis on shabd, is that everything is karma bound)

Why? Because according to such philosophies almost everything, nay everthing in the "lower" worlds, is governed by karma. Thus karma cannot be used in any singular case as an explantation of something. Or, if we do use it, we are more or less (I am thinking of Wittgenstein here) speaking gibberish.

Let me illustrate one crude example: let's say that a person breaks his or her leg. We learn about it, and with our new found vocabulary, we immediately say something like: "Well, that's karma." Yet, if we are to be consistent (especially in relation to our understanding of karma), we must also say that everything preceding such an event was also karmic; in fact, even our statements to the effect that "that's karma" is also karmic.

What do we have here? It's quite simple: we have an all or nothing proposition which has absolutely no discerning force in explaining anything that can occur. We might as well say everything is caused by "Chance." Because in a strange twist of phrase: if everything has meaning (read: everything is karmic), then nothing in particular has meaning (since all meaning is connected). Or, in other words, if everything is karma, then nothing in particular is karmic (since all karma is connected in a wide, and unbreakable, interplay.

Thus, when we say something is karmic, we are (unconsciously, no doubt, and not with any evil intentions, of course) acting like we know something profound and we are saying something brilliant. We are doing neither. We are simply illustrating how truly confused we are over the concept.

Because to truly understand karma is to realize that we cannot at any stage separate one event from another and then extrapolate and pass judgement on that one particular sequence. More simply, if karma is indeed karma, it is absolutely inter-linked with an almost infinite web of other sequences--none of which can be divorced from each other.

What is really quite intriguing about all of this is that if we truly understanding that everything has meaning (everything is karmic, let's say, in exchange), then we could as easily say that nothing (read: no thing---with an emphasis on the no and an emphasis on the separation between no and thing) has meaning; or, as I stated previously, no thing is karmic.

Which leads us to this: if no thing has meaning, then we could just as easily say that it is all "chance." (And by chance, I mean that we cannot properly adjudicate any singular event and give it a truly causal basis--rather, we could only give it a probable explanation--not dissimilar to quantum mech



collapsed to the same dimensional level).

Let me punch line this and make it clearer:

We are probably much more honest when we say "we really don't know why such and such happened, ultimately." All we know are certain phenomenal events which lead us to such and such a conclusion. However, when we begin to pontificate like we know, we usually say something like it is "karma."

As we should know by now, nobody knows what karma ultimately is. Why? Because it is an endless web, if we take the doctrine seriously. Thus, it may be that materialists are being more polite (and less arrogant) when they say that randomness (even if chaos has some ultimate predictable order) or chance is at the bottom (or top) of the universe.

I say all this because in shabd yoga related movements (Eckankar and Radhasoami included), we have a tendency to act as if we know something. And in that knowledge we oftentimes say things like such and such is karmic.

Well, we do not know what karma ultimately is. (Why? Because all actions are interconnected, which leads to the initial action which leads to the causal mystery of Being, or Matter, or I don't know what it ultimately is---which, naturally, leads to profound unknowingness). All of this points to the fact that karma--as a concept and as daily used--is more often than not a political weapon that we use in order to justify ourselves or others---or, at worst, in order to jockey for some perceived status of understanding among a sea of ignorant humans--acting like we know some thing, when we truly do not.

I elaborate on all of this, because even though i find the concept of karma intriguing, we so often misuse it.

Much better, I suspect, to say that we really don't know much. Much better to proffer learned ignorance in these ultimate issues. But alas! there wouldn't be so many fun intellectual disputes if we did.

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Paul Twitchell and Shabd Yoga

Concerning the history of shabd yoga and Paul Twitchell's connection to it, I thought I would write a few words (and mention a few books), since there has been a bit of misinformation.

First, Sikhism is not the basis for shabd yoga. Rather, Sikhism (as founded by Nanak) grew out of the Sant Tradition which was prevalent in North India for many centuries. Such Sants as Kabir and Namdev predate Guru Nanak and they each taught variations of sant mat and shabd yoga.

The best scholar in this area is W.H. McLeod who has written a number of fine academic studies which clearly shows that Sikhism, like the Kabir-panthis, like the Sat Namis, and like the Radhasoamis later, were manifestations of the Sant movement which had spread throughout India as a philosophical school which focused on a number of illuminating tenets, not the least of which is the listening to inner sound.

In this regard, I suggest: Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion (Oxford) The Evolution of the Sikh Community (Oxford) and the edited volume: The Sants (published by the University of California in conjunction with Motilal in Delhi).

Also refer to Vaudeville's Kabir (Oxford) and Juergensmeyer's Radhasoami Reality (Princeton) and Sikh Studies (G.T.U.)

Shabd yoga is most likely traceable--at least in its Indianized forms--to the Vedic period, if not before.

Thus there are a number of different schools of shabd yoga; many of which, including Sikhism, focus meditation on the eye center and do not at all advocate kundalini yoga. Indeed, in the Guru Granth Sahib Nanak argues against such yogic systems which concentrate on the lower body and breathing.

Paul Twitchell learned of shabd yoga from Kirpal Singh, who was himself initiated by Sawan Singh, who was in the lineage of Jaimal Singh and Shiv Dayal Singh--the founder of Radhasoami.

Radhasoami, however, is not an offshoot of Sikhism; it is rather a modern manifestation of Sant Mat, which predates both Sikhism and the Kabir-panthis. Thus today there are numerous schools of Radhasoami, some which have nothing to do with Sikhism.

The reason most people mistakenly believe that Radhasoami is connected to Sikhism is because of the popularity of the Beas and Ruhani Satsangs which have had exclusively Sikh-born masters. However, Tulsi Sahib--Shiv Dayal Singh's guru (the founder of Radhasoami) was not a Sikh, nor are the majority of Radhasoami or shabd yoga masters in India.

Twitchell learned what he knew of the tradition primarily from his study under Kirpal Singh. It was only later (when the former President of Eckankar, Louis Bluth, offered his R.S. library to Twitchell) that Paul learned more about the history of shabd yoga, but even then he got most of his facts and details wrong. I say wrong not in a theological sense, but in terms of simple history: wrong names, wrong dates, wrong facts, etc.

Eckankar was in fact the last to have shabd yoga in the beginning because that is what

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what Twitchell himself told Kirpal Singh (in a correspondence - which I saw) he was doing.

Again, the problem that G, David Rife, myself, and others have with Twitchell is that he was not honest about his spiritual roots. This dishonesty was extensive: from plagiarism to coverup.

Since shabd yoga concentrates on the individual and his or her access to mystical experiences, I am not at all surprised that "Eckankar" works for people like Holly and others. Indeed, all religions and all systems "work" in that sense. I mean astrology also is very meaningful to millions, even though it is based upon a pre-scientific understanding of cosmology, quantum theory, and relativity.

So the key here is to realize that what is "working" in Eckankar has much more to do with the structural, even inherent, possibilities of every individual to have transpersonal experiences beyond the rational mind than it does with any "organization."

But let us not condone any one organization which has an almost built-in tendency to lie about its past and to deceive its future members by not cleanly and clearly explaining how it began.

No doubt, every group--from Radhasoami to Sikhism to Christianity--should also be scrutinized thoroughly.

There is nothing negative about this, I believe. Rather, it makes us better understand what is what.

Books to refer to on this subject:

Heart to Heart Talks, Volume One and Two by Kirpal Singh (which mentions Paul Twitchell)

Thus Saith the Master by Charan Singh (which mentions Twitchell's plagiarism)

The Encyclopedic Handbook of Cults by J. Gordon Melton (which outlines, in brief, Eckankar's history)

and the forthcoming:

LIFE 102: what to do when your guru sues you by Peter McWilliams.

It talks about how J.R. was connected to Eckankar and how he deceived thousands, etc.

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Why Radhasoami Satsang Beas has not sued Eckankar

It is a good question that Johnson raises about why Beas has not yet sued Eckankar over copyright infringement. I cannot speak for Beas officially, but I think there are a few reasons:

- 1) Johnson's books are copyrighted and they were copyrighted at the time of their publication (the 1930s); and, as I am informed, the copyright has been updated.
- 2) Charan Singh in 1970 explicitly stated that he was aware of Twitchell's plagiarism in a question/answer session during his last tour of the United States (refer to the book Thus Saith the Master).
- 3) Kirpal Singh, and his several successors were also keenly aware of Twitchell's plagiarism. Indeed, I had a very long conversation with the late Sant Darshan Singh - Kirpal's son - about the issue.
- 4) My sense is that Beas does not want to litigate over this issue, since they are not publishing Johnson's books for a profit (all books are sold at cost). This does not mean that Beas may not be forced to do something about this legally in the future. I do know that they have been advised numerous times by various parties to do something legally about the issue.
- 5) Knowing the late Charan Singh, he always liked to avoid legal proceedings--being trained as a lawyer himself--since they most often cause more harm than good (and cost people thousands of dollars).
- 6) I should also mention, though this is the first time I have stated this publicly--that several shabd yoga masters in India have read the Making of a Spiritual Movement, including the late Sant Darshan Singh, Maharaj Charan Singh, Baba Faqir Chand, S.D. Maheshwari, and others.
- 7) Each of them agreed that Twitchell had inappropriately copied huge sections from Johnson's several books.
- 8) It would be interesting to see what the present shabd yoga gurus think about Eckankar's nefarious activities. I have not talked to any of them about it.

Hope this helps, albeit slightly.

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LOTUS-FEET OF CLAY

A Reluctant Mystic Looks At Spiritual Movements

John Wren-Lewis

This was originally published in "Understanding Cults and Spiritual Movements" in the mid 1980s.

Some, if we believe what they tell us, are born with spiritual consciousness. Others appear to achieve it by prolonged practice of meditation and other disciplines or by attachment to a guru. I had spiritual consciousness thrust upon me in my sixtieth year without working for it, desiring it, or even believing in it. As a result, I have been presented, amongst other things, with a somewhat original perspective on understanding cults and spiritual movements, which is the occasion for this article.

The crucial event was a shattering, out-of-the-blue mystical experience in 1983 which, to the astonishment of everyone who knew me, and most of all myself, left me with a permanently changed consciousness, describable only in the kind of spiritual terms I had hitherto vehemently discounted as neurotic fantasy-language. Not that I would have called myself an atheist or materialist--indeed I had published extensively on the need for a religious world-view appropriate to this scientific age. But I was emphatic that such a faith would have to be essentially humanist in orientation, focused on creative action in the physical/social realm. [1]

[1] See my book, **What Shall We Tell the Children?** (London: Constable, 1971).

I regarded mystical experience and the whole idea of spiritual search as escape into unreality, fully justifying Freud's diagnosis of religion as humanity's universal neurosis. [2] Even when I collaborated in extensive psychological research on mind-altering drugs in the late 1960's, and shared many of the strange experiences that turned a whole generation on to the mystics, I remained quite unconvinced that such things were more than temporary aberrations of the brain. Psychologically interesting though they undoubtedly were, I found nothing that seemed to justify mystical expressions like God-consciousness or eternity or the pearl of great price, or for embarking on any kind of spiritual quest.

[2] See especially my essay **Love's Coming-of-Age** in *Psychoanalysis Observed*, edited by Charles Rycroft (Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1966).

What happened in 1983 would nowadays be called a near death experience or NDE, though it differed in several notable ways from most of those I'd read about in the rapidly-growing literature on this topic (which I had, incidently, dismissed as yet another manifestation of the mind's capacity for fantasy.) In the first place, I had none of the dramatic visions which have hit the headlines in popular journalism and occupy a prominent place even in serious scholarly studies like Raymond Moody's **LIFE after Life** and Kenneth Ring's **LIFE at Death**. [3]

As I lay in the hospital bed in Thailand after eating a poisoned sweet given me by a would-be thief, I had no out-of-body awareness of the doctors wondering if I was beyond saving, no review of my life, no passage down a dark tunnel to emerge into a heavenly light or landscape, and no encounter with angelic beings or deceased relatives telling me to go back because my work on

earth wasn't yet finished.

[3] Moody, R.A. - *Life after Life* (N.Y.: Bantam, 1977) and Ring, K., *Life at Death* (N.Y.: Coward, McCann & Goeghegan, 1980) For an absolutely superb review of this whole field of study, including the best critical survey yet published of writings both ancient and modern, see Carol Zalesky's **Otherworld Journeys** (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1987).

I simply entered - or, rather, was - a timeless, spaceless void which in some indescribable way was total aliveness - an almost palpable blackness that was yet somehow radiant. Trying to find words for it afterwards, I recalled the mysterious line of Henry Vaughan's poem **The Night**: "There is in God (some say) a deep but dazzling darkness". Re-reading the NDE reports collected by Moody, Ring and others many months later, I found some accounts with echoes of my experience, but in nearly all the near-death literature even the most blissful darkness - experience seems to be regarded as a preliminary stage before transition (with or without the famous tunnel) into light. The condition I entered, on the other hand, seemed so complete in itself that light would have been quite superfluous.

An even more marked difference from the general run of near-death experiences, however, was that I had absolutely no sense of regret or loss in coming back from this joy- beyond-joy, this peace past understanding, into physical life. In fact my experience as the hospital's ministrations restored the body's vital signs was nothing like a return. It was more like an act of creation whereby the timeless, spaceless Dark budded out into manifestation, and what manifested was simply not the same me-experiencing-the-world that I'd known before: it was Everything that is, experiencing itself through the bodymind called John lying in a hospital bed. And the experience was indescribably wonderful. I now know exactly why the Book of Genesis says that God looked upon all that He had made, not just beautiful sunsets, but dreary hospital rooms and traumatized sixty-year-old bodies, and saw that it was very good.

What I am trying to describe (and have attempted to describe in fuller detail elsewhere [4]) is no vague feeling of "good to be alive." On the contrary, I no longer cared if John lived or ceased to be altogether, and the change of consciousness was so palpable that, to begin with, I repeatedly put my hand up to the back of my head, feeling exactly as if the doctors had removed the skull and exposed my brain somehow to the infinite blackness of space. Occasionally I still do so, for the new consciousness has remained with me ever since, which is the third and most significant difference from what happens in the general run of near-death experiences, and also from the altered states experienced with psychedelics.

[4] "The Darkness of God: An Account of Lasting Mystical Consciousness Resulting from an NDE," in *Anabiosis: The Journal for Near-Death Studies*, 5, No. 2, Fall 1985. A still fuller and more analytical account is due to appear in the *Journal for Humanistic Psychology* sometime in 1988, under the same title.

This is in no sense a high from which I can come down. The sense of awe-ful wonders has at the same time a feeling of utter obviousness and ordinariness, as if the marvel of everything-coming-into-being-continuously-from-the Great Dark was no more and no less than just the way things are.

From this perspective, the term altered state of consciousness would be a complete misnomer, for the state is one of simple normality. It seems, rather, as if my earlier state, so-called ordinary human consciousness, represents the real alteration, a deviation from the plain norm, a kind of artificially blinkered or clouded condition wherein the bodymind has the absurd illusion that it is somehow a separate individual entity over against everything else.

In fact, I now understand why mystics of all religions have likened the enlightenment-process to waking up from a dream, but even so I had no thought, to begin with, that the awakening could be other than a temporary glimpse of Reality, which would all be gone by morning. So powerful was this expectation that the next day I spent several hours packing up to leave the hospital and deciding where to go next in precisely the old way, as if I were an isolated individual coping with his environment (after a very interesting experience the night before). Only as I was walking in the hot sun to the police station to report the crime was I struck by the sense of loss that the Dark was missing, and my first thought then was, "Ah well, you've had the Vision - I suppose now you'll have to join the ranks of all those Seekers who spend their lives trying to attain Higher Consciousness." And then, to my amazement, I suddenly saw it was all still there just waiting, as it were, to be noticed, the Dark behind my eyes and behind everything else, bringing again the perception that of course everything exists by emerging fresh-minded from the Dark now! and now!, with a shout of joy yet also in absolute calm.

And still I thought it must all fade away soon; only after the whole cycle of drifting off and snapping back again had been repeated several times a day for some weeks did my mind start getting round to the fact that I might not be going to revert to the old permanently-clouded condition. The NDE had evidently jerked me out of the so-called normal human state of chronic illusion-of-separateness, into a basic wakefulness interrupted by spells of "dozing off," simply forgetting the Dark until the sense of something missing from life brings about instant re-awakening with no effort at all. I apparently wasn't destined to become a seeker in any ordinary sense--I'd been handed the pearl of great price on a plate. But my awakening had brought no instructions of the kind reported by some mystics (and by some near-death experiences [5]), about what it was all going to mean for the future conduct of my life. I had an overwhelming wish to pass on the awakening to others somehow, but had received no divine commission to be a guru, and indeed hadn't a clue what to suggest, since I could scarcely recommend taking a potentially fatal dose of poison.

[5] See Kenneth Ring's second book, **Heading Towards Omega** (N.Y.: Morrow, 1984), and **Return from Death** by British researcher Margot Grey (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985).

So I began feverishly researching the once-despised world of mystical literature and spiritual movements in quest of understanding and guidance. Indeed as my research progressed I became irritated and concerned by the way most systems protect themselves in advance against any expectation of substantial success-rate, by representing enlightenment as a very high, difficult achievement requiring years or perhaps lifetimes of intense effort; the most articulate modern cartographer of the spiritual life, **Ken Wilber**, actually makes the comparison with becoming a master musician, scientist or athlete. [6] Such a model is totally at odds with the key feature of God-consciousness as I know it in my own firsthand experience, namely its quintessential ordinariness and obviousness - a feature actually emphasized by many mystics from whom Wilber himself quotes. While I wouldn't go as far as Krishnamurti by totally denying that meditation and other disciplines could ever help towards realizing God as "just the way things are," I know absolutely from my own case that such intensive training isn't necessary, and I see no evidence either from history or from modern movements that it's any kind of sure road to awakening.

[6] See for example Wilber's book **Eye to Eye** (Garden City, NY: Doubleday/Anchor, 1983) - but the point is common to all his books.

In fact, after four years' intensive research I've come to the conclusion that in ancient

traditions and modern spiritual movements alike, theorizing about God-consciousness and enlightenment has totally outrun firsthand experience, often to the point where the oystershell gets mistaken for the pearl (or the finger for the moon, in the famous Buddhist proverb). And I do agree with Krishnamurti that probably the most pernicious theory in this regard is that of the guru as a Master requiring obedience and submission.

Krishnamurti calls it pernicious because it enshrines what he believes to be a fundamental fallacy, namely that the act of submission is a way of transcending the illusion of separate selfhood, when in fact, he believes, it must inevitably confirm that illusion in an insidious way. On this point I wouldn't be quite so dogmatic; while I'm sure submission is indeed subtly ego-confirming in many cases ("I can surrender better than you can"), I'm prepared to believe that on occasion it really might move someone towards seeing through the illusion of separateness and hence awakening to only God as simply the way things are. My own reason for regarding the Master-concept as pernicious is that it imposes an almost irresistible temptation on guru and disciples alike to keep quiet about and/or rationalize away any experience that might detract from the guru's claim to infallible authority justifying surrender.

The classic illustration of this is the pathetic spectacle of spiritual movements insisting that reports of less-than-perfect behavior on the Master's part are either wicked lies put about by enemies or, if evidence cannot be denied, are explainable as the Master's deliberate attempts to shock followers out of uptightness with outrageous behavior, or test their capacity for total surrender. Before my NDE I used to seize eagerly upon such scandal-stories as evidence that gurus were either frauds or madmen or both. Now I know the explanation is more complicated; a few frauds and madmen there may be, but I'm quite sure now that some of the teachers who've been involved in scandals do have first-hand experience of God-consciousness. Things they say or write, often some of their little stories, carry the ring of a truth that couldn't have been culled from secondhand sources.

And for me as an outsider there is no conflict here. In the first place, I know from my own firsthand experience that God-consciousness doesn't abolish human appetites. When I'm in it I don't lose my taste for meat or wine or good company or humor or detective fiction - I actually enjoy them more than ever before. I don't cease to enjoy sexual feelings, nor do I see anything inherently dirty about money. What the consciousness does bring is the cheerful equanimity of knowing that satisfaction doesn't depend on any of these special preferences of John's bodymind being met; it is inherent simply in being, in the Great Dark which is (in G.K. Chesterton's marvellous phrase [7]) "joy without a cause." This, of course, does have a profound ethical effect, since it means that cravings have no power to run my life - but since it's so easy to drift out of the consciousness from time to time, I can and do also lapse from such detachment. (In my particular case, the commonest and nastiest lapses are into impatience, bad temper and argumentation when I drift into the soap-opera called "they're trying to push me around.")

[7] See my article "Joy without a Cause" in The Chesterton Review, XII, No. 1, February 1986.

This was of course another issue on which I initially hoped for some help from mystical writings or a spiritual movement: was there anything I could do, like meditation or diet, to reduce the frequency of drifting out? I was extremely puzzled when my research turned up almost no reference to any such possibility. Krishnamurti is the only spiritual teacher I know whose writings hint at experiences similar to mine in this respect; everywhere else, it's taken for granted that one is either a disciple on the path, practising meditation or guru-darshan or whatever to reach God-consciousness, or else a Master who is supposed to be in it permanently. Now while I'm quite prepared to believe there may be Masters who enjoy the consciousness uninterruptedly,

the total silence about the drifting-out which I experience daily seemed highly suspicious. I was therefore very interested to come upon Agehananda Bharati's important book **The Light at the Center** [8], in which he asserts quite categorically that "permanent enlightenment" is only a conventional fiction of the guru-system, possibly never actually realized, but maintained in order to foster the total surrender which is believed essential for the system to work.

[8] Agehananda Bharati, *The Light at the Center* (Santa Barbara, CA: Ross-Erikson, 1976).

The trouble is that once such a system is swallowed, the guru cannot admit to lapses without completely discrediting his claim to have any enlightenment to pass on. So from the highest possible motive, a sincere desire to share his God-consciousness, he is tempted to rationalize, probably even to himself. Sexual advances toward attractive disciples become tantric exercises or studies of the chakras, a beer-belly is due to the descent of shakti-power, outbursts of temper are to weaken disciples egos or to test their devotion, collection of money is needed for spreading the Word, gifts are accepted because the disciples wish to show their devotion, and so on through the whole hackneyed catalog. Even worse, there is a tendency for the wish to spread the Word to pass over into the most insidious of all power-trips, with the Master thinking of himself as God rather than vice-versa, the phenomenon Jung called inflation. I know about this from personal experience; some of my worst lapses into impatience come when I'm wanting to get on with writing about God-consciousness! But because I'm not claiming to be a Master, no-one gets sucked in and I'm soon forced to come off it. When the Master-disciple relationship has been established, disciples have to go along with the Master's rationalizations or abandon the hope they've placed in him.

And from the wider human point of view, I believe the closed, self-confirming guru-system has an even more important defect, even with Masters who manage to avoid such temptations, namely that there is little or no opportunity for theories and techniques to be evaluated against their experiential results and exchanged for better ones. For example, Maharishi Maresh Yogi has given his authority to a scheme of seven ascending stages of consciousness through which disciples are supposed to pass. In my experience the first of his stages, readily attained during meditation, has nothing much to do with God-consciousness at all, and I recognize no others except the two highest, the sixth, which is characterized by worshipful gratitude to the divine, and the seventh, the totally obvious recognition of Unity, of "I am That." Moreover, for me these are not two stages in a process at all, but simply opposite sides of the God-consciousness coin, notwithstanding the paradox that by conventional logic gratitude would seem to require someone to be grateful to, and who is there, if I am That? I have no idea what this discrepancy between my experience and Maharishi's theory means, since I've yet to find any of his disciples who've "gotten that far," and he himself remains hidden behind the Master-role, unavailable for discussion. Is he reporting firsthand experience in some way different from mine (maybe more advanced), or has he adapted his God-experience (which I'm sure he's had) to fit traditional yogic theory? The Master-system prevents such questions from being investigated.

I have a similiar, though different, problem with the system of Da Free John, who claims to experience sahaj samadhi, the simple consciousness of only God in everyday life, and then speaks of having gone beyond it into the ultimate mystery of bhava samadhi, the eternal Preluminous Void prior to all manifestation. In my experience these again are not stages on an ascending path, but simply he two sides of That. The world-process of manifestation is the continuous outpouring of the Great Dark in self-giving love, and the Great Dark is not the ultimate Home to which we aspire to return, for none of us ever left it; when we are prodigal sons and daughters we don't really go into any far country, because there can't be such a place--we

just forget the Home we never left and can't possibly leave. Now is there some deep difference of experience involved here from which I could learn, or is Da Free John merely interpreting his experience into the traditional upward path framework as a way out of the folly of seeking enlightenment (he says seeking merely confirms the self-sense, which he calls Narcissus), in practice his whole movement seems locked into climbing the rungs of a ladder, while his statements about his own experience, at times refreshingly frank, at others show the same old reticence of the Master-role.

I believe the world desperately needs a new, totally experimental mysticism that will set all the traditional theories on one side and try to find out, more in the spirit of science than of religion, what factors really bring about awakening, which can only happen if those who've experienced awakening eschew the Master-role and discuss their firsthand knowledge openly, lapses and all. That, at any rate, is the cause to which I've decided to devote whatever years remain to me before My FDE (Final Death Experience). If any readers of this article are to help, by writing honestly about their experiences (for instance, if anyone really has made it through Maharishi's seven stages), I'd be delighted to hear from them. For myself, I have to report that over the past four years the Consciousness seems in some strange way to have taken over more of my life quite of its own accord, so that I now drift out much less - and there have been some remarkable side-effects, which I've described elsewhere. [9] Meanwhile, since an essential part of this whole exercise is the ruthless exposure of the fact that Masters have lotus feet of clay, I salute from across the world the work done by this admirable journal.

[9] See (4) above, and also my first venture into what Charles Tart calls "state-specific science" in **Dream Lucidity and Near-Death Experience**, Lucidity Letter, 4, No. 2, 1985 (Dept. of Psychology, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Originally trained (at Imperial College of Science and Technology, London University) as a mathematical physicist during World War 1, and after a period of wartime research moved to the chemical industry, rising via management of fundamental research laboratory to the post of Assistant Research Controller of one of the world's largest industries. During this time was elected Fellow of the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications and of the Royal Society of Arts, and served as Chairman of the International Committee on Morphological Crystallography and External Examiner in Technological Forecasting to the University of Loughborough. Meantime developed strong interest in problems of relationship between science and religion, leading to frequent broadcasts and to over 300 articles in leading periodicals, as well as contributions to numerous books.

Appointed Distinguished Visiting Lecturer to the University of Leeds, Gunning Lecturer at Edinburgh University, Stephenson Lecturer at the University of Stirling. Gave memorial lectures for Bishop George Bell and Dean Vaughan, and was first H. G. Wells Memorial Lecturer at Imperial College. Inaugurated "Technology and Society" lecture/seminars at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1970. During the 1960's also developed strong interest in psychology and religion, leading to publication of the now famous essay in *Psychoanalysis Observed* and to appointment as Advisor to the Association of Psychotherapists in the United Kingdom. In 1970 was founder-chairman of the Association for Humanistic Psychology in the United Kingdom. In 1971 left industry to become Visiting Professor in Religious Studies at the University of California and thereafter at New College, Sarasota, Florida. Book, *What Shall We Tell the Children?* is widely used as study of the basis of religious education in a scientifically oriented culture, but is probably best known for having influenced Bishop John Robinson to produce the controversial *Honest to God*. Following a near-death experience in 1983, John Wren-Lewis has embarked on research on mystical consciousness in association with the International Association for

Near-Death Studies at the University of Connecticut.

FOR FURTHER READING:

1. Talks With Sri Ramana Maharishi (Three Volumes).
2. The Art of Happy Living by Baba Faqir Chand.
3. Enlightenment of the Whole Body by Da Love Ananda (alias Da Free John; Bubba Free John; Franklin Jones).
4. Tibetan Book of the Dead, edited by Evans-Wentz.

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Metaphysical Pathos, Existential Grinds, and Lane's full of Crap

Well, in the spirit of tweaking myself first, I thought I would respond to several recent posts by Timothy, Kent, and others, concerning the issue of biases.

I think both of them (along with others) raise a very pertinent and important point. Lane is indeed biased. Now the next question that is constructive is to then decide which information that is presented in his writings can be of use outside of his perceived slants/prejudices/and the like. That is, can we find the plagiarism for ourselves? Can we get the back issues of Orion and see if indeed Twitchell did name replacements? Can we read some of the original documents (like birth records, death certificates, etc.) to see if Twitchell had provided different birth dates (from 1908 to 1922)? Can we get copies of Scientology materials of the late 1950s with Twitchell's name on their published articles? Can we see if Twitchell was so deeply involved with Kirpal Singh by looking at the 10 year correspondence between the two?

These are very important questions and they should be answered by those rightly skeptical of Lane's biases. This is naturally how we should approach any text which contradicts something we have a deep affinity for.

However, I think the would-be reader is in for a surprise. I think you might find out that my comments on Twitchell's plagiarism, cover-up, duplicity, were only the tip of an iceberg. I think, to be frank, I underestimated how much he plagiarized for instance. Just this last week I went over a report by an Eckist who doubted my study and wanted to see if Twitchell had plagiarized anything else (besides The Far Country, Letters to Gail, and The Tiger's Fang) and to his chagrin and mine he found that both volumes of The Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad contain several hundred paragraphs from Johnson's 1930s books. The Eckist was shocked to say the least (he thought that I had tracked down all of Twitchell's plagiarism; I haven't even gotten close to scratching the surface).

He then mailed me his ten page report, saying in essence that he stopped looking for more plagiarisms because it "would most likely take ten years to track them all down--so extensive are they." Thus, I think Eckists should read the materials for themselves to see if they can discern the same similarities that I found. By this kind of scrutiny we may be able to have a number of studies, instead of one, which will underline the question of whether or not Twitchell plagiarized, like Lane claims.

Moreover, when it comes to the issue of cover-up, it might be conducive to do a more extensive search of Twitchell's earlier writings to see if there are more things to be discovered or illuminated.

I say all of this because I think we should "doubt" texts. But in doubting we should also try to discover or discern for ourselves whether or not an author's major claims hold up. In this way, we can ferret out the valuable and usable and verifiable information from the particular slant that the author has on the material in question.

This way we will know for ourselves whether a text is similar, whether Sudar Singh exists, whether Twitchell gave contradictory birth dates, whether Twitchell associated with Vairagi masters or mo



But let us not give in to the easy temptation of dismissing a study's findings by resorting prematurely to inner plane excuses. Let's scrutinize the study on this plane first. Let's test the empirical evidence that is proffered by more deep empirical examination.

My bias is that if we cannot trust someone on this level (something which is at least open to tests), if he/she can't give us straight information and straight leads about where they get such information, then we should be very hesitant about trusting him/her on the next level (read: astral plane).

If a used car salesman does not provide you with an accurate (and traceable) record of the car you bought (he hid the number of miles, the previous ownership, etc.), you have the right to turn the vehicle back in for further inspection. My hunch is that if a religious leader does the same we should hesitate about taking his spiritual vehicle for a ride. Maybe we should inspect it a bit further, especially if we are going to take it for a lifetime ride to another universe.

Rip, shred, and lacerate.

Lane basher #1

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Hypercriticism and Yaubl Sacabi

I think it is perfectly appropriate to "test" the extra-ordinary claims of masters, yogis, sages, mystics, and mahantas. What I find curious is that we are more hyper-critical of those who document their challenges of these so-called gurus than we are of the very gurus themselves.

It does not matter what tradition we are talking about (From Eckankar to Radhasoami to Advaita Vedanta to Disneyland), anyone who makes claims of a trans-rational nature should be placed under very close scrutiny. Yet, I find that we are more apt to kill the carrier of bad news (oops, Twitchell didn't plagiarize, he just "compiled"; oops, Twitchell didn't cover-up, he just "evolved" and changed names; oops, but Darwin did steal money, because Harold said so..... hmm) than inspect the message itself.

Andy is right that there is more to the Darwin chapter than Eckankar tell us. And why is it that Darwin gets wasted by certain Eckists and Klemp, but Twitchell escapes the hook? What is fundamentally the difference between Twitchell and Gross? My sense is that Gross was "delegitimated" by the so-called "legitimacy" of Klemp. In other words, Gross' gave up the symbols too early and the symbols (namely trademark terms, like Eck Master, Mahanta Consciousness, and so on) came back to haunt him.

If you want to say that Darwin did some reprehensible things, then tell me exactly what were they? And how do you know that Twitchell didn't do almost exactly the same? And how do you know that Klemp in his own way has not xeroxed Gross?

What we are noticing here, of course, are frames of criticism. Because the leader has criticized someone, the followers then more or less follow suit (Darwin is bad). But when the current leader does not criticize the founder, the followers also more or less refrain from criticizing him (Twitchell was "creative"). Well, maybe we should help Darwin's image, just as we have been trying to re-image Twitchell.

(Below are some of my ironic revisions of Eckankar's claims against Darwin):

Eckankar claim: Darwin stole money (millions of it)

spin doctor: Darwin borrowed money for the good of the corp.

Eckankar claim: Darwin sexually hassled women in the office and elsewhere

spin doctor: Darwin was trying to groom his chelas' auras

Eckankar claim: Darwin did not show respect to the living Eck Master

spin doctor: Darwin thought he was still the Mahanta, though temporarily in retirement. He was having back problems and the medications made him a bit irritable. It's tough being God-enlightened and having back problems. Where's the Doan's pills when you need them?

Eckankar claim: Darwin was caught by the negative force and is no longer a member of Eckankar.

spin doctor: Just because Darwin took a couple of million and hid it in a dummy corporation

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higher interest rates and was going to return the money, plus extra, later on.

Generally I find that we don't spin doctor for Darwin Gross. Yet, we spin doctor for Twitchell and for Klemp or for almost any guru.

The tendency to do such may be related (in mathematical terms) with the percentage of our day to day involvement with the guru in question.

I think it is good to bash writers and undergraduate term papers and the like. But I also think we should really deeply question the ways in which we condone plagiarism, cover-up, tax fraud, lying, and the rest.

To be sure, nobody comes out unscathed, but I do think that those who make the extra-ordinary claims deserve very best extra-ordinary analyses. If we are willing to rip and shred critical studies of our respective gurus, then we should go the extra mile and do the same to those people who are providing us amazing promises.

In other words, we are probably more critical of the 7/11 clerk than we are of God-realized Masters. To be sure, I want the Big Gulp machine cleaned once in a while, but I do think that guy who claims to have access to the very highest plane of consciousness deserves to be critiqued on why he can't write original sentences or be straight about his resume. I mean the 7/11 guy would get booted for lying on his vita. When we find out that "God-man" did it, we say that he was just being "inventive" or "creative."

Tell that to your boss. He seems to have a higher standard on integrity than we do, and he sells candy....

Written on Memorial day in honor of Andy's quite pertinent query.

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I enjoyed reading Mr. Archer's recent post about objectivity, etc.

I do think that people should "doubt" whatever anyone may write. That's the whole point of critical thinking.

Thus, when I accused Twitchell of plagiarism, cover-up, and deceit (read: lying), I think it is vitally important for the reader to check my sources directly. That is, look at Julian Johnson's THE PATH OF THE MASTERS and WITH A GREAT MASTER IN INDIA and compare them with Twitchell's THE FAR COUNTRY and other books (including SHARIYAT and LETTERS). Then one can decide whether or not there is a similarity between Johnson's writings and Twitchell's.

It is also important to look at Twitchell's earlier articles (in ORION, PSYCHIC OBSERVER, and SEARCH) and compare them with their later redacted versions. See if the name Kirpal Singh has been switched to Sudar Singh; see if the name Sawan Singh has been switched to Rebazar Tarzs; see if the reference to the Holy Bible has been switched to Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad. Then, one can discover how Twitchell changed names. Also look at how Twitchell talked about Kirpal Singh in his early articles; compare it with how he treats him later.

Yes, by all means look at Twitchell's death certificate (where it mentions his birthdate as 1922) and compare it with his college records or the library of congress biographical data or his family's genealogical history. Look at his marriage certificate to his first wife, Camille Ballowe (who later got remarried and took on the last name of Taylor). Look at each document outside of Lane's interpretative nexus. Look at it, that is, yourself.

This way one can see if my three charges have any evidence to substantiate them.

Now Mr. Archer mentions that I have limited how people can test my objectivity. Actually I can do nothing of the sort. As this forum has demonstated, anyone at anytime at anyplace can shred whatever they wish about me personally, about the book, about my biases, etc. And so they should. I have not one iota of power or inclination to stop it. Rather, I kinda of perversely like it. Why? Because I really do think that critics are our best friends.

Now it may well be that people do not like my writing, my angle, my slant, my religious affiliations, my diet, my surfing and much more. But ultimately what concerns an Eckist is whether or not my charges have any documentation. For that reason I mentioned to Mark to look closely at the original documents.

Mr. Archer then raises the interesting issue of whether any of this kind of information that I have presented has any relevance to Eckists or Eckankar. On one hand it may not. People may not care that th

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that an Eck Master can get excommunicated. People may not care that an Eck Master can make bad and faulty predictions about the future and still get paid for them (read Twitchell's column in "TALK TO GOD" for CANDID Press). People may not care that Twitchell has the time to "Talk to God" about men's penis size, or lost ones in Vietnam, or about lace panties, etc. People may not care that a "Mahanta, but not the Living Eck Master" can attempt to embezzle 2.5 million dollars (Eckankar's claim, not mine). People may not care that their spiritual guru sexually hassles women when they work in his office (e.g., Darwin Gross--again this is Eckankar's claim, not mine). People may not care that a Living Eck Master will divorce his wife for his secretary. People may not care that the person who was chosen to choose the Second Modern Eck Master no longer follows Eckankar teachings (i.e., Gail Twitchell's on/off relationship with Eckankar). People may not care that an Eckankar Master will sue another person over plagiarism, but hold himself exempt from such criticism (Twitchell vs. Sri John Roger Hinkins). People may not care that Twitchell's brother-in-law thought he was a notorious liar (Paul Iverlet's exact words, not mine). People may not care that Eckankar will sue one of its own chelas for a million dollars for writing a 12 page term paper and making one xerox copy of it (e.g., Jim Peebles at CSUN in 1977/78).

I could go on for a long time here, but I know I have already beaten the dead horse so much that he has reincarnated six times already....

To be sure, people may not care and they may not see the relevance. The Flat Earth society doesn't really care about moon landings; The Elvis contingency does not care that he is not really working night shifts at Wendy's; Creationists don't care about DNA breakthroughs and fossils records..... Why? Well, because they don't see any relevance or if they do they dismiss them as having nothing to do with the "real" truth.

But my point has always been the same. If you cannot trust a guru on this plane (something that we can see, taste, hear, smell, etc.), then why should we then trust him or her on the inner planes (which most of us cannot see or hear or taste)?

Sure we can go ahead and trust them, but personally I don't see any overriding reasons to do so. I mean if Twitchell cannot own up to the biographical inconsistencies of his own life (and cannot live up to his own self-made standard of how an Eck Master should conduct his life--look at his criteria, not mine), then I guess we could just close our eyes and ears and say "Yea, but."

However, maybe I am just too jaded.

When Thakar Singh says he is celibate, but nevertheless sexually abuses tens and tens of American women, I question his claims of integrity.

When John-Roger says he is an all knowing being, but secretly tape-records his disciples' conversations, I question his omnipotence.

When Paul Twitchell claims that Rebazar Tarzs spoke to him directly in The FAR COUNTRY, but I find out that over 1/2 of it comes directly from Johnson's THE PATH OF THE MASTERS, I do question the authenticity of Eck Masters.

Maybe I shouldn't be so skeptical. Maybe when a cereal box says it has rice crispies in it, but when I open it and inspect it and find that it has rocks, I should just say "yea, but."

I am just not a "yea, but" kinda of ideological worker.

I just happen to think that our spiritual masters should have some type of ethical standards.

Twitchell didn't and Gross didn't.

Finally, Mr. Archer raises the question of false teachings. I definitely think that any religious leader who is going to lie to his membership about his sources is someone to avoid. Yes, I am definitely biased towards integrity and honesty, especially among those in whom we give our spiritual trust.

Now naturally the concerned reader does not have to buy my line of thinking. Rather, they can simply chuck it all and come up with any host of explanations. We can then in this cyber community find out if we find these explanations useful or helpful or accurate.

In this way, we can test each other's objectivity.

And by objectivity, I don't just mean the outer world. I simply mean the externalizations of our observations (inner or outer).

Whatever approach I have taken towards Eckankar, I also think should be taken with any religious endeavor (from Catholicism to Radhasoami).

It should also be taken with "Dr." Lane

As we know, Ph.D. stands for pile it higher and deeper or phenomenally dumb or dumb phuck in reverse (phonetic man)

M.S. for more shit

B.S. for bull shit

A.S. for associated shit (it's so low on the totem pole that it's not even shit).

Since I have five of these above things, I know how much shit there can be.

I only wish our spiritual leaders would be as up front with us, as the fictional charater, Forrest Gump. Why is it that we can create a book and movie character with an I.Q. of 80 who can be honest and human, but our spiritual masters with supposedly higher I.Q.'s are so deceitful. And I really do mean deceitful.

Well, I welcome the rip, the shred, the lacerate.

dave (or the guy who is really full of shit).

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The Unauthorized Eckankar(tm) Page



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The Making of a Spiritual Movement

The Untold Story of Paul Twitchell and Eckankar

by David C. Lane

Email dlane@weber.ucsd.edu

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Due to Eckankar's repeated legal threats against David Lane, the bookcover with the famous **NO EK** symbol has been removed from this page. In its place there is a question mark which represents the questions that we would all like to ask this secretive organization.



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THE POLITICS OF MYSTICISM

Perhaps the most problematic issue confronting transpersonalists is the veracity of inner experiences. For many involved in new religious groups mystical encounters, like near-death and out-of-body excursions, offer evidence of their respective guru's rightful position or succession. This has been especially acute in several Sant Mat related groups, particularly Kirpal Singh's Ruhani Satsang, where mastership disputes are often resolved by resorting to one's inner meditation experiences. But there is a rub in all this that for the most part lies uninspected by those newly initiated.

No doubt a religious devotee may use such experiences as proof for the authenticity of his/her guru or group, but what he/she fails to realize is that there are thousands, if not millions, of people who also claim personal revelations which convince them of the truthfulness of their chosen path. Even Elvis has hundreds of devotees who see his radiant form at the end of a long dark tunnel when they undergo a near-death experience. So if someone in Memphis can see Elvis in their meditation, are we then supposed to believe in the spiritual mastership of Elvis? Don't get me wrong, I am the first to admit that the King had some great songs during his career, but just because a crew of devoted fans have glimpses of him in the alleged after-life does not constitute documented proof of his spiritual attainment.

I have met scores of New Agers, each initiated by some great guru, who claim to have extraordinary experiences. So what? People can be deceived (like, for instance, Arran Stephens who admitted that he was duped on the inner regions by his experiences with Sant Ajaib Singh). So this issue of inner experiences as proof of a guru's status raises a very important epistemological question: how do we know that what we perceive in mystical practices is truthful or accurate? Now we may come up with any host of supporting evidences, but the fact remains that what one experiences individually in the privacy of meditation is circumscribed by exactly that same feature: private, personal experience. What we convey in writing, or what we convey on the telephone, or what we convey by conversation face to face is not evidence of our inner experiences on the spiritual planes, but merely testimony which one can either believe or disbelieve. The naive seeker may accept or reject it as suggestive of truth, but such testimony in itself adds zip to the question of empirical confirmation. Look at the initiates of Thakar Singh or John-Roger Hinkins, each of whom have the same story to tell and it is precisely like their rival counterparts: "I had a mystical experience which convinced me beyond a reasonable doubt that my guru is genuine." The net result is not some universal mystical agreement ("Yes, we do agree that Elvis is the transcendental King"), but rather a plethora of competing accounts, each which patently contradict the other.

What is the primary difference between a fundamentalist Christian and a mystically inclined yogi, especially when it comes to evaluating their ultimate truth claims? Both think they have uncovered the truth. The former by the revealing "Word" of the Bible; the latter by the manifesting inner "Word" of the higher regions. Yet, in both cases, the neophyte is subject to doubt, to skepticism, to deception, since revelations of truth (both inner and outer) are manifold. The Muslims have their Koran; the Sikhs have their Guru Granth Sahib; and the Christians have their Bible. And, for the mystics, yogis, and sages who turn inward what do we find? The Hare Krsnas' see Lord Krishna; the Saivites see Lord Shiva; and Ruhani Satsangis (depending upon your affiliation) see Sant Darshan Singh, or Sant Thakar Singh, or Sant Ajaib Singh.

But, the argument goes, the devoted mystic will say that his or her experiences are authentic (because of the utter certainty of the encounter) and the experiences of others, especially if they belong to a rival group which splintered off after a succession dispute, are misguided, secondary, or illusory. So what we actually have in effect here in terms of truth claims is not essentially different than that of a fundamentalist. The mystic is right by virtue of his/her inner attainment and everybody else is wrong (no matter how politely we may gloss over it: karma or chance?) because he/she happened to get the right guru and the right path (and by right we mean "highest").

But notice how

one rarely finds a completely agnostic posture among disciples about the relative status of his/her guru. Why not? Because just like the fundamentalist he or she is not trained to severely doubt interior revelations of truth, primarily because they appear so real when they occur. It is one thing to state that my inner experiences have convinced me that I am on the right track; quite another to then make judgements on the veracity of other meditators' experiences.

To strike a sociological note here, it becomes fairly apparent that culture plays a significant role in the ultimate interpretations of inner experiences. What at first glance appears to be a simple, sweet path to enlightenment, turns out to be on closer inspection a political contest over religious claims--claims, I should add, that have been transformed by the cultural landscape of when and where they take place. We may wish that mysticism was devoid of culture, or personal bias, or religious prejudice, but it is almost wholly entrenched in it.

Why? Because we never apprehend inner lights and sounds and beings divorced of their interpretative network. In other words, our socially conditioned minds are always flavoring, always transforming, always contextualizing whatever we perceive, whether those sights be inner or outer. And it is exactly when my experiences are personal and internal that I am most subject to error. Why? Because we have yet to discern a normative corrective for mystical encounters. Sure we have templates to gauge inner experiences, their relative efficacy and so on, but since most individuals have no mastery of leaving their bodies we are subject to tremendous imprecision and tremendous speculation. Yet do we admit to this impasse? Do we acknowledge our immaturity in the spiritual arena?

There is something fundamentally skewed when religious converts (of any persuasion and of any methodological bent) begin to believe that they have cornered the market on truth. As one wise saying puts it, "If there really is a God, He/She may find atheism to be less of an insult than religion." The point is obvious: what we know the least about is the very thing we make absolute statements on. Strange, but true. Take Jesus Christ, as a prime, if controversial, example. What do we really know about him? Not very much. Depending on your perspective and the sources that you cite, Jesus emerges as the only begotten Son of God, a Jewish mystic with Gnostic leanings, or a clever, but ultimately misguided magician. The only thing that is absolutely certain about Jesus, at least historically speaking, is that we know less about him than we think. Indeed, the real truth about Jesus' existence is forever buried in the recesses of time.

And yet we have some one billion plus people on this planet right now who more or less believe that if you don't accept the truth claims of Jesus Christ you will end up in eternal hell. All of this and we still don't know what he even looked like and what he did for some fifteen years in his teens and early twenties? Couple this with the contradictory and entirely insufficient biographical details contained in the gospels which are the major sources for Jesus' life and you wonder how a Christian can be so assured in their faith. Put bluntly, you wouldn't allow your son or daughter to marry a prospective suitor if the only information you had on them was equal to what we know about Jesus. But there are millions of us who seriously think that we have to make a lifetime, nay eternal, commitment to a person we have never met and know less about than our next door neighbor.

When it comes to religion and its claims, whether they are based on revealed texts or interior visions, the one common denominator is that we somehow have to check our brains in at the door before entering into the tabernacle of ultimate truth. Yet it is exactly that brain, that three pounds of wonder tissue or glorious meat, as Patricia Churchland so succinctly puts it, that has allowed us to ponder life's ultimate questions. It is that very brain which has led us to pray, to read, to meditate. It is also that very brain which can misinterpret exterior stimuli as well as internal neural firing. My hunch is that before we make any ultimate claims for truth, we understand that we are constantly subject to error.

So the mystic may potentially be better off than the mere believer, who only reads but never actually engages in technical spiritual practices, because he or she gets firsthand experiences of alternate realms of consciousness not merely menu descriptions of them. But this does not mean that the mystic has experienced the "truth" in all its purity and that the mystic somehow "knows" the efficacy of other spiritual teachers or paths. No, what the mystic does in fact know is rather quite simple: a different state of

consciousness which he or she interprets according to his/her cultural or religious background. On that score, I do think that mystics are on the right track; it is better to experiment than simply speculate. Yet, the results of those experiments are subject to numerous interpretations, some of which are better than others. Since we are still at such a preliminary level in our investigation of states of consciousness beyond the waking-rational level, it seems to me to be a much wiser course for us to adopt a stance of honest humility and openness than succumb prematurely to absolute statements or theorizing which in the end cause much more harm than good.

We may want to believe that our chosen (or, in most cases, assigned) religion is the only true path, or that our personal mystical encounters are reflections of universal truth, but when we do so we are only revealing how exquisitely ignorant we really are. It seems to me that the more we acknowledge that exquisite ignorance, instead of suppressing or outright denying it, the better off we will be. And just maybe, like our wise travelers before us (Socrates, Lao Tzu, Nicholas of Cusa), we will realize that learned ignorance is the beginning of wisdom and the cornerstone of truth.

NOTES

1. If I might interject a personal note, being taught in Catholic schools for some twelve years and teaching religion in their high schools for another five has its own peculiar advantages, especially when it comes to the topic of assessing leaders like Jesus Christ. For one, I was brought up with a clear, univocal, and dogmatic interpretation of his life teachings. No confusion, no room for debate--in sum, Jesus was the Son of God, the axis point of human history, and the ultimate meaning of the universe. The only drawback to a strict Catholic education, though, is that when you begin to ask critical questions about the origins of your religion, you run into deep trouble.

I remember vividly my first run-in. When I asked Father Costello, my freshman religion instructor, if Tibetan Buddhists could go to heaven, he unhesitatingly replied, "No, only baptized Christians can enter the Kingdom."

Although I was only fourteen years old at the time, I just couldn't swallow the good Father's answer nor the convoluted logic he invoked to support it. "You mean to suggest that God plays geographical favorites?" Or so my reasoning went, but to no avail. I ended up getting reprimanded in front of the class for being out of line and disrespectful. Needless to say, my doubts about the efficacy of Catholic dogma grew exponentially after this incident.

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With appreciation to Professor Mark Juergensmeyer.

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The Unknowing Sage: The Life and Work of Baba Faqir Chand

From the Prologue

Abstract - Describes a radical Indian guru in the Sant tradition who argued that masters and gurus were deceiving their disciples by making them believe that the Master knows when he appears in their visions and meditation. Faqir argues that they do not know; rather, such visions are the outcome of one's inherent capacity for higher structural (or neurological) adaptation.

Edited by David C. Lane

Prologue

THE FAQIR CHAND LIBRARY SERIES

Faqir Chand [1886 to 1981] was a remarkable Indian sage who spent over seventy-five years practicing an ancient meditation technique, popularly known today as surat shabd yoga, which attempts to induce a consciously controlled near-death experience. Mastery of this practice, according to adepts of the tradition, enables one to experience regions of light and sound beyond the normal waking state, providing glimpses into higher realms of consciousness.

Near the end of World War One, Faqir Chand was recognized by his own guru Shiv Brat Lal and others in the movement to be an advanced shabd yoga mystic. According to Faqir's own account, he could almost daily leave his body at will and experience exalted states of awareness. Nevertheless, Faqir Chand was not satisfied with these attainments and sought for something higher and more permanent. Eventually Faqir realized that no matter how subtle or blissful a meditation experience may be, it did not in and of itself constitute the ultimate in spiritual realization. Rather, the ultimate truth was that no experience could capture or contain the transcendental mystery of Being. In the highest stages of development man does not develop a keen sense of omniscience, but a radical and irrevocable understanding of unknowingness. In sum, one realizes that he or she is nothing but a mere bubble in a sea of existence which is infinite in all directions. As such, the bubble simply surrenders its entire being to that Power which is, in truth, living it.

Thus Faqir Chand became quite outspoken about how gurus, masters, prophets, and mystics, posing as all-knowing beings, have deceived millions of followers by duping them into believing that they have omnipresence and omnipotence when in fact they have neither. What enlightened sages possess, rather, is access experientially to a higher spectrum of awareness, which, in turn, reveals not final or absolute truth, but a growing awareness of how truly mysterious life really is. As Gopinand Singh, the founder of Radha Society, once said, "It is not the

"Wonder, Wonder, Wonder, Wonder hath assumed a form.

Coupled with Faqir's tacit realization of unknowingness, he also exposed for the first time in the Sant tradition how visions of religious personages are the products of one's own inner development. For instance, when one undergoes a near-death experience and beholds a Jesus or a Nanak or an Angel in the middle of the light at the end of a long, dark tunnel, it is not the esteemed figure who is himself orchestrating the encounter. Rather it is the neophyte who is projecting the sacred personage on to the light from his/her own biological and cultural history. The light may well indeed be a transcultural phenomenon, part and parcel of a higher order of awareness or merely a neurological event, but the interpretation of who resides in that light (Is it Jesus? Is it Nanak? Is it my uncle Joe?) is entirely a personal affair, shaded by the nuances of an individual's sojourn for tens of years on a planet we call Earth.

Faqir is perhaps best known for his frank admissions of ignorance surrounding his miraculous appearances to disciples during times of need. He unilaterally confessed that he was never aware of appearing to his devotees. Nor did Faqir Chand claim that he had understood the secret of Reality. As he said on many occasions, echoing the words of such greats as Lao Tzu, Socrates, and Nicholas of Cusa: "How can I make any claims about attaining the Ultimate. The truth is that I know nothing." Hence, Faqir Chand raised the slogan of "Be-Man," arguing that to become a human being, endowed with discrimination and compassion, is a great thing in itself. To be spiritual, Faqir would assert, necessitates that one become a true man (or woman) first.

The Mt. San Antonio Philosophy Group, while not advocating any one position in philosophy or religion, established the Faqir Chand Library Series in honor of vichar, "clear thinking." As the late Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh, a contemporary of Faqir's, once stated, "Clear thinking is 90% of spirituality." Future volumes in the series will include works in both science and religion which promote the Chandian spirit of honest and frank criticism. This volume, *The Unknowing Sage*, represents the first comprehensive study of Baba Faqir Chand's life and work in English.

Introduction

THE UNKNOWING SAGE

After meeting personally with Baba Faqir Chand, it became exceedingly apparent to myself and Professor Mark Juergensmeyer (who visited Manavta Mandir in late August of 1978) [See Juergensmeyer's book, **Radhasoami Reality** (Princeton University Press, 1991)]

that the old sage was something of an anomaly amongst Indian gurus. For, although Faqir Chand had a rather large and devoted following (numbering in the thousands), he absolutely disclaimed himself of any miracles attributed to his spiritual work, saying quite frankly that they were products of either the devotee's previous karma or intense faith. Indeed, it was this very insight which led Faqir to his own enlightenment.

When Faqir Chand began to initiate disciples into surat shabd yoga, at the request of his master Shiv Brat Lal, a most curious thing happened. His devotees began reporting that Faqir's radiant form appeared inside their meditations. Others related miracles that were caused by Faqir's prashad (blessed food), letters, or advice. However, all during this time Faqir claims that he had absolutely no knowledge or awareness of his form appearing to distant provinces or performing miracles to the sick and dying. As Faqir himself wrote,

"People say that my Form manifests to them and helps them in solving their worldly as well as mental problems, but I do not go anywhere, nor do I know about such miraculous instances."

[Faqir Chand, **The Essence Of The Truth** (Hoshiarpur: Faqir Charitable Library Trust, n.d.1976?)]

It was at this point when Faqir asked himself, "What about the visions that appear to me? Are they a creation of my own mind, and does my guru also not know about his appearances to me?" Only then, according to Faqir, did he realize the truth: "All manifestations, visions, and forms that are seen within are mental (illusory) creations."

[Faqir Chand, **The Secret of Secrets** (Hoshiarpur: Faqir Charitable Library Trust, 1975)]

After his realization, Faqir began preaching his belief that all saints, from Buddha, Christ, to even his own master Shiv Brat Lal are ignorant about the miracles or inner experiences attributed to them. In a paper given to the American Academy of Religion in March 1981, I used the term "The Unknowing Hierophany" to describe what Faqir Chand believes; that is, a "Divine" vehicle within the temporal world that is unaware of its spiritual manifestations.

[A revised form of this original paper was published under the title "The Hierarchical Structure of Religious Visions," in **The Journal Of Transpersonal Psychology** (Volume 15, Number 1)]

Though Faqir is probably the most outspoken, other great religious leaders, saints and mystics have expounded on this same unknowingness. However, it is not seen by most (especially devotees) as an explanation of their subservience to the Great Mystery, but rather as a statement designed to exhibit the saint's humility, or as a tacit attempt for concealing his real mission and purpose.

Jesus, for instance, is reported in the Gospel of Mark as asking the crowd that was following him, "Who touched me?" After this, a woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years came up to Jesus and told him about her plan for a Divine cure. By a brief touch a miracle happened, as she was cured from hemorrhaging.

At this Jesus said, "Daughter, your faith has made you well."

[Saint Mark, translated and edited by D.E. Nineham (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976)]

The famed sage, Ramana Maharshi, when asked about Jesus' power to perform miracles, substantiates what Faqir Chand had taught for over forty years:

"Was Jesus aware at the time that he was curing men of their diseases? He could not have been conscious of his powers. Such manifestations are as real as your own reality. In other words, when you identify yourself with the body as in jagrat, you see gross objects; when in subtle body or in mental plane as in svapna, you see objects equally subtle; in absence of identification as in sushputi, you see nothing. The objects seen bear relation to the state of the seer. The same applies to visions of God."

[**Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi**, Volume I, II, and III. (Tiruvannamalai: Sri Ramanasramam, 1972), pages 17 and 355]

Along with this "unknowingness" there is also the internal, ever-present supreme knowledge which saints and sages have described as the hallmark of enlightenment. Jesus said, "The Father and I are one." The Sufi martyr, Mansur al-Hallaj, shouted before his execution, "ana'l-Haqq" (I am the Truth). Sarmad, the Jewish-Indian saint, exclaimed, "I am King of Kings." And Meister Eckhart, in slightly different language wrote, "The eye with which God sees me is the

same eye which I perceive Him."

These quotations illustrate that mysticism is concerned with spiritual knowledge: the relationship of the soul with God, and not with any secondary psychic abilities which may arise as a result of intense spiritual discipline.

However, this kind of knowledge cannot be equated with logical, objective learning. The former is the realization of one's eternal nature, a transcendental experience of oneness. The latter is concerned with dualistic thinking, knowing about things--that which is based upon an illusory division of the world into two separate components: the subject and the object. Thus, when saints talk about the ultimate knowledge, they are referring to the Ground of Being, that which is the condition for all subsequent conditions. Consequently, an enlightened master may not know anything about academic subjects such as quantum mechanics, anthropology, or critical history.

As Ken Wilber astutely comments, *"I have yet to see a guru run a four-minute mile with his 'perfect body' or explain Einstein's special theory of relativity with his 'perfect mind'. . . Perfection lies only in conscious transcendence, not in concrete manifestation."*

[**Spiritual Choices** (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1987), page 258]

Even though Faqir Chand was not conscious of his miraculous powers or his healing gifts (nor, evidently, are most other gurus), does it necessarily hold that all masters are likewise ignorant about their visionary manifestations? Moreover, is it true that all religious visions are individual creations, determined by the faith and concentration of zealous devotees? At first glance, the answer would appear to be "yes," because many internal visions are not of factual and historical human entities, but of amalgamated characters, mythic beings, and fictional heroines--some whose life stories may be entirely based upon the writer's own creative mind.

For example, Paul Twitchell made up the literary figure, Rebazar Tarzs, claiming that the Tibetan monk was over 500 hundred years old and resided in a remote region in the Himalayan mountains. Although Rebazar Tarzs does not, in fact, exist, devoted followers of Paul Twitchell's religious movement, Eckankar, claim to have extraordinary visions of him. What is transpiring is fairly obvious: when one ascends to a different level of awareness (like in O.B.E.'s or N.D.E.'s) they interpret the inner light according to their own particular cultural background. Sikhs see Guru Nanak, not Moses; Catholics see the Virgin Mary, not Buddha; and Eckists see Rebazar Tarzs, not the store clerk at 7/11. For more on this phenomenon, see my chapter, **Gakko Came From Venus: The Invention Of A Religious Tradition**, in **Exposing Cults** (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1993).

However, on closer inspection it becomes apparent that some masters claim to know about their subtle interactions with disciples and that certain visions may not be merely due to extreme faith or concentration. This psychic awareness, as it were though, apparently arises spontaneously and is not the product of any sustained conscious manipulation.

A classic example of a fully conscious bilocation experience comes surprisingly enough from Ramana Maharshi, a sage who did not show even the slightest interest in psychic powers or abilities. Recounts Arthur Osborne, Ramana's biographer:

"About a year after his meeting with Sri Bhagavan, Ganapati Sastri experienced a remarkable outflow of his Grace. While he was sitting in meditation in the temple of Ganapati at Tiruvotiyur he felt distracted and longed intensely for the presence and guidance of Sri Bhagavan. At that moment Sri Bhagavan entered the temple. Ganapati Sastri prostrated himself before him and, as he was about to rise, he felt Sri

Bhagavan's hand upon his head and a terrifically vital force coursing through his body from the touch; so that he also received Grace by touch from the Master."

Speaking about this incident in later years, Sri Bhagavan said,

"One day, some years ago, I was lying down and awake when I distinctly felt my body rise higher and higher. I could see the physical objects below growing smaller and smaller until they disappeared and all around me was a limitless expanse of dazzling light.

"After some time I felt the body slowly descend and the physical objects below began to appear. I was so fully aware of this incident that I finally concluded that it must be by such means that Siddhas (Sages with powers) travel over vast distances in a short time and appear and disappear in such a mysterious manner. While the body thus descended to the ground it occurred to me that I was at Tiruvethiyur though I had never seen the place before. I found myself on a highroad and walked along it. At some distance from the roadside was a temple of Ganapati and I entered it."

Published by the MSAC Philosophy Group
Mount San Antonio College
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THE UNKNOWING SAGE: THE LIFE AND WORK OF BABA FAQIR CHAND

This incident is very characteristic of Sri Bhagavan. It is characteristic that the distress or devotion of one of his people should call forth an involuntary response and intervention in a form that can only be called miraculous.

[Arthur Osborne, **RAMANA Maharshi And The Path of Self-Knowledge** (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1982), pages 93-94.]

Ramana's experience of bilocation indicates that Faqir Chand's categorical statement about all gurus not knowing about their visionary manifestations may need qualifications. Simply put, some saints appear to know about their miraculous appearances. The number of these "fully aware" mystics, however, is so incredibly small that it is not an exaggeration to say that Faqir Chand's "unknowing" hypothesis explains 99% of all the so-called guru visions in the world. The overwhelming majority of inner visions are projections of one's own mind which have no substantial "reality check" with either the outer world or the higher inner regions. Furthermore, the object of devotion in these transpersonal encounters are, for the most part, not aware of their role. Thus, the Chandian Effect is a general explanation which

[The Chandian Effect, so named because Faqir Chand was the first Sant Mat guru to speak at length about the "unknowing" aspects of visionary manifestations, designates two major factors in transpersonal encounters: 1) the overwhelming experience of certainty (ganz andere/mysterium tremendum) which accompanies religious ecstasies; and 2) the subjective projection of sacred forms/figures/scenes by a meditator/devotee without the conscious knowledge of the object/person who is beheld as the center of the experience. I first coined the term in my article, **The Himalayan Connection: U.F.O.'s and The Chandian Effect, The Journal Of Humanistic Psychology** (Fall 1984).]

covers almost all transpersonal visions. Ramana's experience and others like his represents a very small, bracketed, "special" case scenario. As such, it warrants further inspection, but should not be misconstrued as a general reference point with which to adjudicate transmundane happenings.

Concerning these "special cases," Sawan Singh, a deeply admired master in the surat shabd yoga tradition (1858-1948), for whom both Faqir Chand and his teacher Shiv Brat Lal had tremendous regard, wrote that the outward guru can and does know about the inner condition of his disciples. This knowledge, Sawan Singh pointed out, is conveyed to the physical master via the inner Shabd (Divine Sound), though only in extreme cases where the outer master's attention is needed.

[See Sawan Singh's letters to American and European disciples in **Spiritual Gems and The Dawn of Light** published by the Radhasoami Beas Satsang.]

Writes Sawan Singh to one of his disciples:

guiding the disciple, first of all, what is the Inner Master?

"The Real Saint or Perfect Master is one with the Supreme Lord, having merged His Being with the Supreme. Now, as the Supreme Lord has all power, so do the Perfect Masters. He can do as He pleases, and anywhere and always, so that He may better work with, protect, and instruct and guide His disciples.

"Every time He gives the initiation to anyone, He creates an Astral Image of Himself in the disciple. And from then on, the Master never leaves the disciple. The Double, or Other Self, or Image of the Master is sometimes what we call the Inner Master.

"Now, if anything occurs in the life of the disciple that requires the personal attention of the Master, here (in India) in the Body--this Inner Master at once reports to the Conscious Master (in India) and the Conscious Master gives the thing his personal attention.

"The Master sometimes calls these Doubles of Himself his agents. They do his work, taking care of all his disciples. They have the power to act without limit. They can do what the Master wishes Them to do, and They obey His orders.

"The human side of the Master here (in India) may not know what is going on in the life of that person. It may be on the other side of the globe. He will not be aware of the details, but He can know them if He wishes.

"But manifestly, you see how difficult it would be for any one man, as man, to go to all parts of the world and take care of so many. If the Master had a million disciples, He would have an Astral Double of Himself in every one of them, and that Agent of the Master would look after the disciple at all times, reporting to the Master here (in India) only in case of extreme emergency."

[Extract From **A Letter By The Great Master To A Disciple**, Science Of The Soul (June 1985)]

Hence, according to this perspective, the outward master does not know most of the time. Similar to Ramana Maharshi's experience, the Beas master learns of his visionary manifestations on only special occasions. The modus operandi behind how certain masters could possibly know about their disciple's spiritual experiences is explained in a remarkable passage by Da Kalki (alias Da Love Ananda; Da Free John; Bubba Free John; Franklin Jones):

I am fairly certain that by the time this book is published, Franklin Jones (his real birth name) will have assumed a new name.

[Alas! I am correct, as I go through the final proofs Da Kalki is now known as Da Avabhasa. Naturally, this too will most likely be changed by the end of this year (1992).]

"After that time, [when Da Free John achieved Enlightenment]when I would sit for meditation in any formal way, instead of contemplating what was arising in myself, I would contemplate other beings as my own forms. Instead of my own psychic forms arising, the psychic forms, minds, and limitations of others would arise. I was aware, visually and otherwise, of great numbers of people, and I would work with them very directly on a subtle level. In some cases, these people would soon contact me and become involved with me in a personal relationship. Others were people I already

knew. I would work for them in the subtle way, and then watch for signs and demonstrations in their outward lives of the reality of that manifestation. I tested everything in this manner."

[Bubba (Da) Free John, **The Enlightenment Of The Whole Body** (Clearlake: Dawn Horse Press, 1978), page 38.]

My citation of Da Kalki should not be construed as an endorsement of his mastership; it is not. Although I am sincerely a great "fan" of Da Love Ananda's writings, I am a very harsh critic of his personal lifestyle. I have written an extensive article on this very point--how to distinguish the message from the medium--because it is vitally important to remember that a superb writer/thinker does not mean that by extension that the person is "God-Realized" or a "Perfect Master." Moreover, I am not all that sure that Da Kalki has any psychic experiences. I just happen to think that his explanation of possible psychic experiences is clear and rational. [See "**The Paradox Of Da Free John: Distinguishing The Message From The Medium.**" UCSM (Volume One, Number Two).]

Charan Singh, the late head of the Radhasoami Satsang at Beas, for instance, chose disciples for initiation by simply looking at them. I have personally seen thousands of people file directly in front of Charan Singh and in a matter of a few seconds he turns his head to the left or to the right, indicating whether the seeker was accepted or rejected for Nam-Dan.

[Nam-Dan is a ceremony where the living Satguru gives the "Gift of Nam" or Initiation to chosen disciples. It includes precise details about how to meditate and withdraw one's consciousness from the physical body by means of a three-fold method: simran (repetition of holy name(s)), dhyan (contemplation of the inner light or the guru's form within); and bhajan (listening to the divine sound current). There are several movies which have filmed this unusual selection process for Nam-Dan, including Satguru (London 1976), The Dera Documentary (Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, Beas, India, 1970's), and Guiding Light (Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, Beas, India 1983). I personally witnessed the event inside the famous Satsang Ghar at Dera in the Winter of 1981.] Needless to say, it is an awe-inspiring sight, and one which I confess is beyond my limited comprehension.]

During his second world tour in 1970, Maharaj Charan Singh was asked the following question: "Is the physical Master aware of all the initiates' inner experiences?" Charan Singh's answer demonstrates that the outer master does know about his visionary manifestations. Responded Charan Singh: "Our real Master, as I just told you, is the Shabd and Nam. And when we are connected with that Shabd and Nam, that Shabd and Nam takes care of us. The physical Master, of course, is aware of all that. [My emphasis.] But, you see, it is Shabd and Nam which is our real Master, that takes care of everything."

[**Thus Saith The Master** (Beas: R.S. Foundation, 1974), page 150.]

Another example of extraordinary manifestations which go beyond Faqir Chand's hypothesis of unknowingness comes from Baba Jaimal Singh, the first guru of the Beas satsang and a personal disciple of the founder of Radhasoami, Shiv Dayal Singh. In the following excerpts, Jaimal Singh details a most remarkable physical bilocation of his guru. Recollects Baba Ji:

"Once, during Christmas, the army units were allowed four holidays. As I had no official duty assigned to me during that period, I felt that I could best spend it in meditation in my room. Accordingly, I told the cook that I should not be disturbed, that if I needed food I would personally ask for it. Also, if anybody asked for me, he should be told that I was out.

"It so happened that soon thereafter my presence was required for writing some accounts. However, as my door was locked, everybody who came to call me went back disappointed. Meanwhile, the officer of the Unit had demanded full account from the clerk who really did not know what to do in my absence. Just when a thought crossed his mind that he should report my absence to the officer, he saw me and heard me say to him that he should take down the account. This the clerk did. Such accounts were rendered three times daily, and were thereafter sent to the officer concerned by the clerk immediately after he got them. This continued on all the four days during which I was engaged in meditation in my room. However, I knew nothing about it, for I would leave my room only at four o'clock in the morning and ten o'clock at night just to answer nature's call.

"When the holidays were over and I came out of my room, I was called in for accounts for the day previous only. I explained to the clerk that I had been confined to my room for the last four days and had not given any accounts at all for the entire period. The clerk then called the two persons who had been present at the time the accounts were rendered. One of them even produced the paper from which I had actually dictated, saying that I could myself ascertain whether this was the account written by me in my own hand. When I examined this paper, I found it to be exactly what it should have been.

"I silently meditated upon Huzur Swami Ji's Feet and bowed in gratitude for His unbounded Grace in representing me during my absence and carrying out the job assigned to me for that period."

[Baba Jaimal Singh, **Spiritual Letters** (Beas: R.S. Foundation, 1984), pages 13-14. In the same book Jaimal Singh relates several other extraordinary bilocation experiences.]

Although Jaimal Singh's experience was extraordinary, there have been other reports by mystics of similar physical bilocation excursions. The important point to remember, though, is that

[See D. Scott Rogo's **Miracles: A Parascientific Inquiry Into Wondrous Phenomena** (New York: The Dial Press, 1982), Chapter IV, which deals specifically with bilocation experiences around the world.]

such experiences are the exception, not the rule in mysticism. The value of Faqir Chand's revelations of ignorance is that most gurus (I am tempted to say all) in India and elsewhere are in the same lot, but falsely parade their attainments to sincere, if gullible, disciples. Faqir's startling insights show that most religious visions are, in fact, products of one's own mind.

When I use the term "mind" here it should be equated with "imagination." Naturally, all visions are of the mind in the strict sense of the term, but those manifestations which cannot be correlated by others either in this world or the higher worlds are, for the most part, merely vivid extensions of one's imagination.

However, we should not take Faqir's confessions as precluding the possibility that certain rare saints do have access to knowledge far beyond our comprehension, and that being residents of those higher regions have the ability to directly transmit such information to their respective followers.

-----[If I may interject a personal note here, I must confess that I find myself more and more agreeing with Faqir Chand and his claims of unknowingness.]

As a seasoned observer of the guru scene, most of what I discover is petty human motivations. To be sure, there are gurus who have deeply impressed me with their compassion and humility (Charan Singh being, at least for me, the most impressive), but I have yet to unearth an airtight, empirical case for genuine psychic powers. There are always some uninspected loopholes which reveal that natural (versus supernatural) processes were involved. I realize that my skepticism will turn off a number of parapsychology buffs, but in light of Occam's Razor I see no overwhelming evidence to suggest that Faqir Chand's autobiographical admissions are not right on the mark.

Moreover, we should keep in mind that Faqir Chand's use of the term "ignorance" has two meanings. First, Faqir uses the term in an absolute sense equating "Ignorance" (with a capital "I") with God, thereby agreeing with many saints and mystics that the Lord is an unqualified Mystery (as Shiv Dayal Singh put it: "Wonder, Wonder, Wonder; Wonder hath assumed a form"). In this reference, there will most likely be little debate with Faqir Chand. However, Faqir also uses the term "ignorance" to describe his realization that gurus do not know about their visionary manifestations. As we have noted, there may be exceptions to this general rule, though they have yet to be empirically verified.

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The Unknowing Sage The Life and Work of Baba Faqir Chand

Chapter Four

INTERVIEW WITH FAQIR

Editor's Note: Professor Mark Juergensmeyer, who is currently Dean of the School of Hawaiian, Asian and Pacific Studies at the University of Hawaii, interviewed Faqir Chand in August of 1978 at Manavta Mandir. Professor Bhagat Ram Kamal of Government College, Hamir Pur, Himachal Pradesh, transcribed the interview and published it under the title, **The Master Speaks to the Foreigners**. The following edited version contains corrections (and explanations) which were not present in the original published interview.

Mark Juergensmeyer: As I have come here, I would like to ask you something about your development in spiritual understanding. First, you were a disciple of Swami Shiv Brat Lal?

Faqir Chand: Yes, I am a disciple of Maharishi Shiv Brat Lal. You have seen His Statue there installed in the hall. He is my spiritual Father. His spiritual Father was Rai Sahib Salig Ram, who was a Post Master General. Rai Salig Ram Sahib was the disciple of Radhaswami Shiv Dayal Ji, but I have got liberal ideas. I was born in a Brahmin family. From the age of 7 years there was a craving in me for something Unknown which I used to call Rama, Krishna or God. Now I feel that the Unknown thing which I wanted or searched for was Peace, but, at that time, I used to worship Rama, Krishna, God or Goddesses.

Mark Juergensmeyer: Where was this place? What place was this?

Faqir Chand: It was at my village Bhanjal, then in District Hoshiarpur and Punjab State. I have been doing worship from my childhood according to the ideas given to me by my parents. When I was 16 years old I joined service. I passed only my middle school examination. My father was a constable in the Railway Police. He could not give me higher education. So I joined communication service. There I met permanent way inspectors and contractors of all types. I was alone in the Communication section. In the society of those inspectors and contractors I took to wrong ways. I ate meat for 6 months, drank rum three times, once even gambled and lost one rupee and a quarter and once I went to a prostitute. You understand what I am telling you? In 1905 when the Kangra Valley was ruined by an earthquake my thoughts changed. After going to the prostitute I wrote to my father that I had done such and such wrong things, so please send my wife. I was married when I was only 13 years old. At that time I was meditating on the image of Rama and Krishna, according to the Hindu philosophy. When I was at Baganwala Railway Station as Assistant Station Master Lord Krishna used to be with me, whether I was working or walking.

Mark Juergensmeyer: Did you ever go to some Krishna Temple?

Faqir Chand: No. I used to pray to him within my own mind. I never went to any place. Once I was going and Lord Krishna was going ahead of me. There was some cow dung lying on the ground. That in

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and ate it. When I reached home I thought that in no religious book is it written that an image of Lord Krishna or Rama has ever directed any disciple to eat cow dung. So I thought that it was not the real Krishna who had asked me to eat the cow dung. Because I am a Hindu, and I had been given this idea that the Lord takes birth in the human form time to time, thus I started praying to Him. I wept continuously for 24 hours crying out to God that I wanted to see Him in the form of a human being. After 24 hours a doctor was sent for and after examining me he said that I had gone mad. But that morning at 4:00 a.m. the image of my spiritual Father [Shiv Brat Lal] appeared to me while I was asleep. It made me believe that He was the incarnation of Lord Rama. Then I wrote to him a letter every week regularly for 10 months. After 10 months he wrote to me, "Faqir, I am receiving your letters. I admire your aspirations. I have realized Reality, Truth, Bliss and Peace in the fold of Radha Swami Faith from Rai Salig Ram Sahib."

Mark Juergensmeyer: Where was Maharishi Shiv Brat Lal at that time?

Faqir Chand: He was at Lahore at that time. But now he is dead. There is only a samadh [burial tomb] of his. I went to him in Lahore and he initiated me in the Path of the Radhaswami Faith. After about 10 years I went abroad in the First Great War. I remained there alone without my family, and I did a lot of sadhana as is written in our religious books. I saw the Light within and listened to the Sound as is written in the texts of the Radhaswami Faith. But I could not get peace, though I had happiness.

You understand me? I got happiness; I got bliss; I got inward pleasure and I also got miraculous powers, but not peace. Then I used to worry my spiritual Father asking him to tell me about that thing on the authority of which Swami Ji and Kabir had condemned all religions. Because in the books of Radhaswami faith and by Kabir it is written that none except the Saints have realized the Reality. They have said that Rama and Krishna were the incarnations of universal mind and not of the Real God. These saints have further claimed that Muslims have also not reached there and the Christians too have not reached there. So I could not understand that religious philosophy. Once I come on annual leave from Iraq. I went to Hazur Data Dayal Ji Maharaj, my spiritual Father, and troubled him a lot with my love. I followed him everywhere like his shadow. At last he said, "See me tomorrow." Next day, when I went to him, he put one coconut and five [coins] in my lap and said, "I give you an order, obey me: The Real Master shall meet you in the form of your disciples." That is what my spiritual Father told me.

Mark Juergensmeyer: What stages or regions did you reach within according to the Radhasoami faith?

Faqir Chand: There are different stages, different colors and different sounds. I had seen all. But I was not satisfied with all this inward abhyas. So he gave me this work just to make me realize the Reality. When I came to this line as a guru or as a master my eyes were opened. Why? Because those who regard me as their guru and those who consider me as their master my image appears to them in their meditation, in their dreams and even in a state of wakefulness and guides them, whereas I remain unaware of all this. You understand me, what I am telling you? I want to be very frank with you. You have come for research. I am telling you my personal life. Daily I receive many letters. Some people write that I went there in an airplane to take a dying man; some say that I come on a horse; and others write that I come in a palanquin at the time of the death of a man, whereas I do not go anywhere. All what they see in meditation, in dreams or in wakefulness, all proves to me that all what we see inside is nothing but subtle matter or illusion. I think you are following me.

Mark Juergensmeyer: Yes, I follow.

Faqir Chand: There is a student. He says that when he went to the examination hall for a

science paper he did not know that difficult paper. He prayed to me. I appeared there, sat under the desk, and dictated the answers to those difficult questions. The student got 98 marks out of 100. The truth is that I myself do not know science, nor did I go to his examination hall. About five days ago a lady sent me two packs of apples and some other fruit, along with a letter that she was having her bath in a river in Kashmir. Suddenly a wave of water came and took her away for 10 or 15 yards. She writes that when she was drowning I appeared there, caught her hand, and brought her out of the river and said to her, "You have yet to do a lot of work." Now she writes to me in her letter to let her know as to what work she is to do? Now neither did I go there to save her, nor did I tell her that she has yet to do a lot of work.

This is the secret which has been kept so guarded by all the religions and even by the gurus of the Radhaswami Faith. They have kept the public in dark. They have exploited us; they have robbed us; they have cheated us and they have deceived us by saying that they go, whereas they do not go or manifest themselves to anybody. They have admitted this truth before me. . . My own spiritual brother Bhai Nandu Singh agreed with me. Now he is dead and in his place Sri Anand Rao is working in Andhra Pradesh [Sri Anand Rao has since died]. So, from all these experiences, I have come to know that whatever we see in the form of our ideal [depends on our own karmic perspective]. If one's mind is pure then the answer that one would get from the manifested ideal shall be true. But if one's mind is not pure, then the answer will be wrong and there is every possibility that the ideal may put you on the wrong way of life if your mind is not pure.

Now, at this age, I meditate on light and sound. And I try to find out, who is seeing the light within and who is listening to the sound within. Sometimes after two or three months when I go into deep meditation my "Self" stands separated from the Light and Sound. There I lose my own entity. I forget who am I. I know nothing about God, I know nothing about my guru and I know nothing about my own self [ego]. From all such experience I have come to this conclusion that Who am I? - I am a bubble of supermost consciousness. That is what my realization is. This is what I have gained. Now what I feel is that there is One, Infinite, Supermost Element. From it, when it moves, sound and light come out and from that light and sound this creation takes place. Cosmic rays and many other types of rays come out of this light and sound and all this gross matter is made. So it is the Will of that Supreme Power. Everything is oozing out of it and is merging back in it. There is egoism in us and it moves us to do this or to do that.

There are four kinds of egoisms in us: 1. Egoism of Physical Form; 2. Egoism of Mental Form; 3. Egoism of Light Form; and, 4. Egoism of Sound Form. I ask myself, what have I attained? Silence in the beginning and silence in the end. Whatever is happening, it is all His Will. Every philosopher or saint who came and made inward search for realization wrote his experience. But their followers in order to gain fame and name and to collect wealth kept this a secret from the general public. Though to keep the secret was necessary in those days, it is not required now. Today humanity has been divided into different sects and religions. Every day there are communal conflicts in the world. Hindus and Muslims are fighting and Arabs and Jews are fighting. Therefore, after realizing the secret, I raised the slogan of Be Man. Why? My spiritual Father had told me, "Before leaving your physical frame change the teachings." So I have changed the teachings.

No one on this earth, he may be Christ, he may be Radhaswami, he may be Kabir or he may be anybody - none has the right to say that he has understood the Reality in all respects. That power is bigger, bigger, bigger, bigger and bigger. Our senses cannot reach there. This is what I have understood. So I pass my life helping others, serving the poor and preaching the truth. I have three free hospitals here. To the general public I preach the art of living a happy life.

You sleep and you enter the state of dream. In dream you feel angry with one. You hit him in

the dream. Your hand in that state of dream is moved. You are frightened in your dream and you speak and your tongue is moved. You create a woman in your dream and you enjoy sex with her. Your semen is discharged. These are the effects of the thoughts of your dreams, which are not in your control. It proves that the thoughts of your mind are capable to have effect upon your body.

In the state of wakefulness we hate others and we keep enmity with others. All that we do in our state of wakefulness, with our own will, it must have its effect upon us. I have proven to you that if involuntary thoughts can effect our body, why not voluntary thoughts should have their effect upon us? So what I myself practice I advise others to adopt in their lives. Always be optimistic. Do not harm others for your personal benefit. Do not think ill of others. This is one thing which I preach. Secondly, if anybody wants that he should not come to this earth again in any form or in any other life, for such people I have [the exposed secret] with me.

Mark Juergensmeyer: What is that Truth?

Faqir Chand: When I am alone I ask myself, "What have you gained?" I have gained nothing and I have gained everything. I have got no desire to achieve now. Because I have realized that I am a bubble of super consciousness. That Supreme Power has created this Universe. Thoughts we take from outside and some bud out from within. Life is nothing but a dream. There is only one Truth, which is always one and only one. After this realization I have got Peace. Due to my past karmas I am still alive; I do not know how long that Power shall keep me in this body. I have a lone desire that after my death, if I get anywhere, I may be able to tell the world what happens to me after death. This is my only desire.

Mark Juergensmeyer: Where do you think you will go after death?

Faqir Chand: So far as my realization is concerned, bubble will merge in the ocean. Light will merge in the light. But whatever I have thought and whatever I have said that will remain in this Universe. Because matter is never destroyed. Whatever I am talking now, it shall remain in this room.

Mark Juergensmeyer: When you hear the purest sound and see the purest light, what color is that purest light?

Faqir Chand: That light is white. There are different colors and kinds of lights within. As the sun shines in the morning it looks red. In the evening when it sets we again see it red. It is due to clouds, dust and other particles that are in the sky which make us see the sun as red, otherwise sun is not red. It is all white. Similarly the red light of soul (atma) is white. Because we have desires they cover our souls and according to the desires of the worldly things the light is different.

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Mark Juergensmeyer: The purest light is white?

Faqir Chand: I cannot say it was white. But I can say that it is more than white [as in a literal color].

Mark Juergensmeyer: And the sound?

Faqir Chand: Yes, sound, I used to listen [to] - bells, thunders of cloud and veena. But now I listen only one Sound, which is an unbreakable tune, about which I cannot say any word. It is what it is. But what does it give to me? It gives peace and bliss. Now at this age of 92 years I do not care for the sound and light too. Why? Because light is seen by "Me" [Self] and sound is heard by "Me" [Self]. Then who is great? Light or sound or He who sees it and listens to it? Who is great? Light is great or "I" [as Transcendental Self] am great? Sound is great or I am great? The self of mine is the supermost Element of consciousness in my body. If that is not there then sound is of no value and light is of no value to me. That is what I have realized. I do not know about myself, brother, what will be my end. You have come from America. Whatever I have realized I have told you.

Now, after having a long experience of my life, I feel that most of the past mahatmas and the present gurus by keeping the secret Truth unrevealed/undisclosed have been unfair to the public and have often exploited them. They have taken undue advantage of the ignorance of the people. They have built their own big buildings. They have made air-conditioned rooms for themselves. These gurus enjoy themselves and the poor people being ignorant give their hard earned money to these gurus at the cost of their comforts and those of their children. I do not deny I receive donations, but I personally do not use even a single penny out of these donations. My own son is well placed. He draws about Rupees 2500 per month. He is a big metalurgist, Russia returned.

Mark Juergensmeyer: Yes, what does he do?

Faqir Chand: He is at Bhilai Steel Plant as a metalurgist. So I have my own means of earnings. Whatever is received here in the form of donation is spent for the ailing poor and on publications published by the Mandir. My publications are distributed gratis. Daily I receive a lot of mail and some people write that my form is seen by them and [a miracle has been done] for them. But I am ignorant of all that. Whatever sometimes I say to somebody comes out true, and he thinks that I have done it. But this is wrong. I have not done it.

Mark Juergensmeyer: Then should one have a guru?

Faqir Chand: Guru means Knowledge; without guru we cannot achieve anything. Our mother is our guru, our father is our guru, our friend is our guru and the world around us is our guru. But the Real Guru who makes the Self free from the bondage of this world is called the Sat Guru. And to attain the Reality the Sat Guru must be a perfect man. Nowadays this guruism has become a source of earning one's keep.

Mark Juergensmeyer: You know, some people say that science is also a guru.

Faqir Chand Yes, science is also a teacher. But excuse me, unless someone is there to explain to you about it, you will not understand anything about it. Therefore, external guru is most essential and i



knowledge without a teacher or a professor, who teaches him and makes him [come to] realize that knowledge which is within that student. But if the brain of the student is not capable and receptive then teacher or professor may do anything, he would not be able to understand it. Yes, anything else you want to ask?

Mark Juergensmeyer: Well, after you, will there be any other teacher?

Faqir Chand: I have no right to say anything about this subject, but I may tell you that where there is demand there is supply. It is the law of nature. When the public will face the troubles and when they will seek for peace, nature will create so many teachers. You know, there are different kinds of brains. If some accident occurs, some people rush to that place to rob the victims, some go there to give them food, some go there to give medical aid, some other goes there to know the cause of the accident and to thrash the person responsible for the accident, and still some other people go there to find out the ways and means so that such accidents may not occur again. The great brains come in this world as per the desires and the needs of mankind. All the great saints such as Mahavira and Buddha and others come according to the demand of the times. It is His will. I cannot say definitely, but this much I am certain that when there is too much heat nature automatically brings storms and rains. If it is too cold, then nature automatically brings heat. It is a natural process about which He only knows.

About me, there are so many miracles attributed to me that if I write about all there would be a big book. But I say upon my honor that I do none of these miracles. It is either fate or the faith of the person concerned. In case of some trouble my disciples remember me, my image appears to them and helps them and they write to me, whereas I do not know anything myself. So from all this I have realized that every man is perfect. Be true to your own self. That is what my religion is. Do not think or dream of harming anybody for your personal benefit. This is the only religion that I have to propagate; then have this belief that there is one Supreme Power. Believe Him in any form you love or like - Jesus Christ, Rama, Krishna, Faqir Chand or Baba Charan Singh or anybody else. But have faith in one. Neither [the saint] helps you nor Faqir Chand helps you. It is your own faith, your own desire that helps you. . . .

Well, my dear Mark, I do not know whether whatever I have realized is correct or incorrect. I do not claim that I am correct, but I have spent my life very purely. I have been true to my parents and I have been true to my officers. I am a retired military man. What I have realized after a long search is that one must not think ill or do any harm to anybody for one's personal benefit. Second, one must have faith in only one form, it may be of any God, Goddess or a Guru. Without Form one cannot reach the goal.

For instance, you have passion, unless you consider a lady as your wife you cannot enjoy your passions. If you have to satisfy your greed, unless you believe anything as gold or currency you cannot feel happy. Similarly about attachment. If you do not consider someone as your son or daughter, you cannot enjoy the feelings of attachment. So, if you want to reach that ultimate goal, you must have faith in one Form thinking him Perfect.

Therefore the worship of Christ, Rama, Krishna or Guru is most essential. In the beginning it is very essential. People think me to be a saint or realized man. Their belief makes them solve their own problems, whereas I am not even in the know of such things. It proves that everything is within you and not outside. The Radhaswami Faith, or the philosophy of saints, makes a man realize that everything is within you and not outside. I do not say that my search is final. Truth is not known to anybody. As you sow, so shall you reap. This is the law that governs this globe. Everything depends upon your own thinking.

Mark Juergensmeyer: Are there some other disciples of Swami Shiv Brat Lal?

Faqir Chand: Yes, there are a few.

Mark Juergensmeyer: Do they preach the same thing as you preach?

Faqir Chand: You see, the plane at which I speak everybody cannot speak. Why? Because I have got no attachment. I do not want respect, money or fame. This institution is a registered trust recognized by the government. Whatever anybody gives that is spent for the benefit of the public. Those gurus, who have personal interest, say things in different ways. My area is not too vast. Only the educated people come to me and those who have spent their life in meditation or sadhana. My teaching for beginners is not suitable. I know it. But I cannot now teach A.B.C. It is not in my power. Only the professors, teachers, doctors and judges come to me the most, because they understand what I say. Everyone of us is a bubble of consciousness. But there is egoism in it. Egoism of body, egoism of mind, egoism of soul and egoism of surat. When this egoism goes away what remains? Silence in the beginning and silence in the end. Pass your life cheerfully.

Mark Juergensmeyer: Do the women face any difficulty in realizing themselves?

Faqir Chand: This I cannot say. Ladies must know themselves. Very frank talk it is. They know better about their difficulties, but I may tell you one thing. He who indulges much in sex cannot realize Reality. This is my final research. This is what I told the Americans last time and this is what I shall tell them again.

Mark Juergensmeyer: That means there is no difficulty to women.

Faqir Chand: No, soul of woman and of man is the same. When it comes in the material form only then there is difference. Some soul comes in the form of a lady or wife and the other in the form of a man or a husband. The modern science is proving many old beliefs to be futile. The angle of understanding is now different. The present educated people and the scientists are not going to believe blindly the religion as we have been believing in the past.

I am not afraid of anything while I speak the Truth. Last time when I went to America I delivered a lecture to about one thousand Americans in the Research Association called A.R.E. and told them: "You say that Jesus Christ was the son of God; it was not only Jesus Christ who was the son of God, we all are the sons of God." I further said that "In the Bible [it states that] the earth is flat, whereas the scientists have proved that the earth is round. The first scientist who proved this fact was hanged." When I was telling this my friend Dr. I.C. Sharma [now Faqir Chand's successor] pressed my feet, so that I might not speak the Truth. But I said that was Truth, why should I not speak it?

Even our Lord Krishna, who is believed to be the incarnation of God among Hindus, lost all his children and grandchildren before his very eyes, fighting against one another after drinking wine. What could Krishna do? Every man must reap the fruit of his own deeds. He may be a prophet, a saint or anybody. Even these incarnations have not been free from sufferings for their own action. Even some very great men died a miserable death. I do not know about myself, how would I die. Though at this age of 92 years I am better than many.

My spiritual Father had asked me to change the teachings. I do not know what should I change. He never told me to raise the voice of Be Man. He never told me to open this Library. He simply said to me, "Change the teachings." So, whatever I have realized, if someone cares for it, let him care, and if somebody does not care let him not. If someone wants to read my books, let him read. I do not care. If somebody wants to give some donation here for the help of the poor, let him give, and if somebody does not give, let him not. I have my own means of livelihood. I have my own home to live in.

Last time I was sick for some days and then I remained here in this room. When I went home I paid 45 rupees to the Mandir as a rent of this room. I might be wrong my friend. It is possible, but my conscience is clear. I am True to my "Self." In other ashrams people take service from the disciples for gardening and other odd jobs. But I never get such work here from anyone. If somebody wants to do any service willingly, let him do it. But I do not want to ask anybody.

Mark Juergensmeyer: There is a framed letter from Virginia. Do they proclaim you as their guru?

Faqir Chand: Yes, they love me dearly.

Mark Juergensmeyer: But you do not want to be a guru?

Faqir Chand: I have never initiated people as others do. Whatever I say in my discourses is the only "Nam" or initiation. Those who believe me take my hints and act upon them. They are benefited. If anyone with sincere heart comes to me with any desire, I wish that his desire be fulfilled.

Mark Juergensmeyer: What is the significance of the word *Radhaswami*?

Faqir Chand: Radha is our Real Self; Swami is that place from where it has oozed out. Radha is Real Self, which is neither body, nor mind, neither light nor sound. To take that Self back to its origin and the state of reunion of Self with its Origin is called Radhaswami, this is what I have understood.

Mark Juergensmeyer: For meditation, is this word a mantra?

Faqir Chand: First one must undertake such meditation as may take the meditator away from the physical senses. This practice is known as the repetition of Nam given by the master to his disciple. So by repeating that Nam, not with tongue but with mind, here amidst the eyebrows, you go above the physical senses, as you go above in the dream while sleeping. Then comes the mental region, from where the thoughts ooze out. As the process of thinking starts, different kinds of pictures and scenes come before us. To surpass them or to go beyond the mental region and its creations, you are to undertake the practice of dhyān of the master. We people [have a tendency to fall asleep and dream] by this practice, but by concentrating on the face of a guru, provided one thinks him as the real master and Perfect, then the mental senses will also cease, or the meditator shall not have any feeling of mental existence as well.

Beyond this is the Light. The entity which lives in the Light, sees the Light and enjoys the bliss of Light is our Soul or Atma. Beyond that is Sound or Shabd. When one listens to that Sound one forgets all about the first three stages that [comprises a trinity]: body, mind and light. That is the 4th stage according to the saints. But I have realized the 5th stage too. Reference to 5th stage is also made by Saint Kabir in his writings. But that cannot be understood by everybody. The 5th stage is that condition where one loses one's entity as an individual. Self merges in the Supreme as a drop mingles in the ocean. So far I have not been able to merge myself in that 5th stage. I try my best, but I fail. Why? I do not know. Therefore, I say that it is not in man's hands to reach that stage. It is either His Will or the destiny of a man. So, at this age of 92, I surrender myself to that Supreme One.

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Chapter Three

THE SECRETS OF FAQIR

One

I do not know whether my realizations are right or wrong. I do not make any claim that my realization is final. People say that my form manifests to them and helps them in solving their worldly as well as mental problems, but I do not go anywhere nor do I know anything about such miraculous instances. At Sarsonheri a person came to me. He had suffered from a paralytic attack. Now he was able to walk, but still the paralytic attack had left its effect on his left side. However, he was not suffering from any serious trouble. He was an old man and a widower. His daughter, who accompanied him, told me that when her father suffered from the attack she prayed to me. I appeared there and told her that her father would be all right. She said to her father, "Baba Ji has come and says that you would be all right." Her father said that he did not see Baba Ji anywhere. Then his daughter directed him to see straight in front, and thus he also saw my form standing there. That man told me that I remained with him for twenty-two days, until he was well. What is this?

Two

I am here not forever. Death must come one day. For what should I spoil my true self? When I adopted this path of life, I had pledged that I would follow this path with Truth and shall speak to the world my realization of this path. The writings did not reveal the Truth to me. Denunciations of my forefathers in the writings of the Saints pained me, but I had a firm faith in His Holiness Hazur Data Dayal Ji Maharaj. His Holiness had directed me, "Faqir, change the mode of preaching before abandoning this mortal frame."

Now, after having such experiences with me, I question myself, "Faqir Chand, say, what mode of preaching do you wish to change? Which teachings should I change?" The change that I can make in the present mode of preaching I explained in the discourses that I delivered during my tour. The change is, "O man, your real helper is your own Self and your own Faith, but you are badly mistaken and believe that somebody from without comes to help you. No Hazrat Mohammed, no Lord Rama, Lord Krishna or any God or goddess or Guru comes from without. This entire game is that of your impressions and suggestions which are ingrained upon your mind through your eyes and ears and of your Faith and Belief." This is the change that I am ordained to bring about.

Three

Shri Jagan Nath is present here. He offered me 403 rupees for the Manavta Mandir. He told [me] that I awakened him at 1:30 A.M. a day before. But I did not go to awake him nor do I know anything about it. Possibly other mahatmas and gurus might have the knowledge of such instances of manifestations of their forms. At least I remain unaware. Many of the present gurus have admitted before me that they remain unaware about such instances. His Holiness Data Dayal Ji also s

Truth in his early discourses. My entire life and my mission is based upon Truth. My realization and research is ahead of the realizations and research of the previous Saints. I have not followed their trodden path of maintaining an iron curtain around the Truth. They kept mankind in the dark. The great Saints of the past suffered from untold miseries in their lives perhaps due to this very reason.

The question is why these great Saints suffered? I have my suspicion that these Saints suffered because they did not speak out the total Truth to the world. The cause of their sufferings might be their untruthful living. I am myself not aware of my own end. I feel pained when I contemplate upon the miserable end of the great Saints. I am not here forever. For what should I indulge in deceitful acts? To me, my "Self" is more dear than anything else in the world; therefore, I always speak the plain truth - that I do not manifest anywhere, nor am I aware of my manifestation to any person at any place. Some people said at the time of their death that Baba Ji had come in an airplane to take them along. Others said that Baba Ji had brought a horse and others said that Baba Ji had come in a palanquin. But I do not know anything about such instances. I simply wonder when people narrate to me such instances of their near and dear ones. I fearlessly proclaim and appeal to the present gurus of the religious world that either they should contradict what I say, or they should speak out the truth that they too do not manifest themselves to their respective devotees. If they too are sailing in the same boat in which I sail, then why do they keep their poor devotees in the dark and exploit them?

Four

In obedience to the dictates of His Holiness Hazur Data Dayal Ji wherever I went during this tour I said, "O man, be Pure in your deed and be Pure in your conscience." When these great Saints, who spent their lives in meditation, could not save themselves from the fruit of their deeds, then how can you householders be an exception? You cherish enmity against your brothers for selfish gains; you oppose and fight against your parents and you do not hesitate in deceiving your friends. You yourself decide, how would you save yourself? You study your own life and examine what you do. We pray for the death of our own real brother, so that we may inherit his property as well. We indulge in litigation against our parents, brothers and sisters for more and more property. Wives go to the court of law against their husbands and husbands against their wives. How can such people aspire for higher values of life and live happily?

Five

Nowadays this phenomena of manifestations is the main cause of religious exploitation of the ignorant devotees. This is the root of communal rivalries. Recently in Benares it led to communal riots between Hindus and Muslims. Benares remained under curfew for a week. Why? Because both Hindus and Muslims are ignorant of the Truth.

In this age of machine Saints incarnate to reveal the Truth, but unfortunately whatever the great Saints like Guru Nanak, Kabir and Radha Swami Dayal have said their devotees do not adopt it in their lives. Their sayings and teachings are used as tools for gaining personal name, fame and wealth by the present gurus and preachers. Ignorant masses are advised to get initiated, for they shall be led to heavens by their guru after their death. Had many of the present gurus not confessed to me that they too remain unaware about their manifestation I would have thought that I am in the wrong. The late Bhai Nandu Singh Ji of Nizamabad, Shri Anand Rao Ji of Secundrabad and Sant Tara Chand Ji have admitted that they too do not manifest themselves to their respective disciples. Of late another Guru known as Shehan-Shah, who works as

successor to Sant Kirpal Singh Ji in the Western countries, met me in the train at Sonapat Railway Station. He is a friend of Pir Mughan Sahib. He also admitted that his form also manifests to his devotees, but he does not know anything about his manifestations. Unfortunately none of them speaks out the Truth on the platform.

Six

I tell you an incident of my own life. My daughter Prem Piari was married for some years, but she had no child. Once my daughter and her husband went to Firozpur in connection with a marriage in the family of Pandi Wali Ram. My daughter came to me and complained that her mother-in-law and other members of the family taunt her and trouble her for being childless even after five years of married life. I consoled her saying, "Daughter! you are born to a Faqir, why bother about children and suffer pains? What is the surety of life, for what should you have a desire for children? Do not listen to others and remain busy with your own work.

She went away and after about ten minutes, Shri Des Raj, my son-in-law, came and he also complained about the necessity of a child. I promptly said, "Why do you worry about this? You shall have many children." This thought never struck my mind that why I have made two different statements to my daughter and son-in-law on the same subject? Neither could I ever think that my daughter would die. As preordained, my daughter and son-in-law went in for a second marriage and now he is a father of many children.

What I wish to convey by narrating this incident is that a Saint speaks or tells only that which is destined to happen. No Saint can cancel the result of your deeds. What is allotted cannot be blotted. The punishment for his or her deeds can be minimized by those who understand this and then act upon what a Saint says. Simple initiation into a particular religious sect would not serve your purpose. It would not save you from the result of your bad deeds. This is the plain Truth that I am explaining to you. If you like, you may come and listen to me. If you don't, you may not. You may give any donation to the Mandir or not; you may read any book of mine or not. At least I do not want to spoil my "Self."

Seven

During this tour I also visited the Ashram of Sant Tara Chand Ji at Dinod in Haryana state. About ten years ago he had come to me at Delhi. He had thought that if Baba were a Saint he would give me his left-out food. He came and sat among others. He had no distinct clothing, nor did I know him. In the meantime a cup of tea came for me. I took about two or three sips, and then handed over the cup to Shri Tara Chand saying, "Get to work; you shall be well known in the world." What was this? I did not say anything intentionally to Tara Chand. It was destined to happen.

Now I went to his Ashram, which is double of our Manavta Mandir. There are very big halls. There are provisions to serve food to at least one thousand people in stainless steel utensils. Tara Chand thinks that this is all the fruit of my blessings. Now, I think that whatever was said by me to Sant Tara Chand, it was pre-destined for him. If my blessings can help in establishing bigger centers than my own then why should not I give the same blessings to all who come to me? It is the law of thought radiation that works. When he came his thought radiations touched my mind and I involuntarily said what was due to happen.

On the basis of such experiences I say that no Saint can give you anything. A Saint speaks out only that which is to happen. This is what I have understood. I do not know anything about others. I may be wrong. I do not make any high claims. If a Saint can give you anything at all, it is the true knowledge of going beyond the ocean of existence. He can tell you the art of living a

happy and contented life. This is all that a Saint can do. This is what I have realized after a long search.

Eight

Different people from different walks of life come to me for blessings. Sometimes I say something and sometimes I do not say anything. Some time back, a man from Hyderabad sent a draft of 10,000 Rupees to the Mandir, with a condition that he should recover from his illness. I did not accept that draft for the Mandir, but deposited it in the name of the sender and wrote to him that life and death were not in my hands. . . My inner self did not accept that donation. Thus, I did not allow that draft to be credited to the Mandir account.

I did not receive any news from that man for about one and a half months. Now I have received a letter from his wife that her husband is dead, and that the money her husband had sent to the Mandir may be returned to her. I returned that amount to her. Now the question is why did I not write to that man that he shall recover from his illness? To others, who come for such blessings, I do say so. Why, to that man, did I hesitate? What is to happen must happen.

When I reached Dinod (ashram of Sant Tara Chand Ji), a young man came there and said to me, "What is your name? From where have you come and why have you come here?" I thought him a man of the C.I.D. But later I learned that he was a journalist. I told him that I was a Faqir; I had come from Hoshiarpur to bow my head at the hallowed feet of my Sat Guru Dev Sant Tara Chand Ji. He further enquired, "Is Tara Chand Ji your Guru? How is he your Guru?" I told him that just as Swami Virjanand was the Guru of Swami Dayanand, but the sublime Truth was revealed to Dayanand Ji by the statue of Lord Shiva, similarly I attained the Sublime Knowledge from Sant Tara Chand Ji and my other such disciples. Thus I have come here to pay my respects to Tara Chand Ji, a True Form of my Sat Guru.

Nine

If thou hast sustained life, impart Sat Guru's True Name!

By imparting the True Name, thou shalt attain peace!

See what golden words are written, that if you have come in human body then impart the True Name of Sat Guru. By doing so, what shall you gain? Peace. I have attained Peace. Why did I go to Sant Tara Chand Ji? Why do I respect Dayal Dass Ji? Why do I have regards for Kamalpur Wali Mata (old lady disciple of Kamalpur)? Why did I bow my head to Shri Krishak Ji? Because from them I have attained Peace. How did I gain this Peace from them? When they told me that my form manifested to them and directed them to the highest stages of spirituality within but without any knowledge of mine then I was obliged to realize that whatever forms or scenes I used to visualize within were nothing but mere projections of my mental impressions and feelings. All those inner scenes, colors and forms that I used to visualize and enjoy proved a mere fancy and illusion, thus I attained Peace. I attained the true knowledge of dwelling in my own "Self."

Ten

At Dinod people offered me about 1000 rupees which I handed over to Sant Tara Chand Ji. I

had no right to accept that amount from the poor people, though I accepted an amount of 1600 rupees from Shri Tara Chand. Sant Tara Chand told me that I had helped him in reaping his crop of grams. Other people also narrate such instances, but I do not go anywhere. I did not initiate them, but they believe that I am their Guru. Their belief in me has helped me to realize the Truth. What Truth? The Truth is that all these manifestations of Guru, God, Goddess, Rama or Krishna are not a Reality, but an illusion. I am convinced of this Truth. With this realization I have attained Peace. The root cause of disquietude is mind. Once its real form is recognized, you attain Peace. I have recognized the real form of my mind. Sant Kabir writes:

*Disciple bows to the Guru, tis known to all!
Guru bows to the disciple, tis very rare!*

This is the secret of Sant Mat (belief of the Saints) which was kept intact behind the iron curtain of gurudom. I have removed this curtain. His Holiness Swami Ji Maharaj revealed this secret through symbols. Once one disciple said to Swami Ji, "Rai Saligram Sahib is your great devotee and true disciple." His Holiness replied, "Who knows whether Salig Ram is my Guru or I am his."

Similarly Hazur Data Dayal Ji Maharaj used to say about me. Whenever I visited His Holiness at Lahore, He used to say in his discourses, "This Faqir has come to enlighten me and to lead me beyond the Phantasmagoria."

This secret has caused a great harm to mankind. We householders have been befooled by the so called gurus. Our hard earnings have been taken away by them and even then they expect that we should remain in their very circle ever bowing to their feet. Many people come and prostrate before me as well. Why? Because they are not aware of the Truth. They are ignorant of the Secret. I often say that I have come from the Anami Dham, the Nameless Abode, to tell that "O man, know thyself by thyself."

There is no difference between you and a Guru. But you are ignorant and you are very much governed by your mind. You run after the gurus and sadhus for the fulfillment of your worldly desires. You make humble entreaties to the gurus. When these gurus themselves have disobedient and characterless children, and when they themselves do not have good relations with their wives, how do you think that they would do any good to you? Therefore, I again emphasize my point, "O man! your good lies in your own deeds." A True Guru simply reveals to you the secret or the Truth. The Truth is that this world is a field of the deeds. Whatever deeds you or I have done, we must face their results. No power on earth can protect us. This is the Truth.

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Eleven

Sometimes I think that whatever I have understood so far may be wrong. But I do not repent because my conscience is very clear. I have never said or done anything for any selfish motive. I never throw dust in your eyes to get name or fame for this short life. This is also a fact - that I need money for Manavta Mandir - but I never wish to adopt fraudulent methods for the collection of money. If anybody wishes to help the Mandir happily, he may, but if one does not want then one may not. I care not for the position of a preceptor. I have fear and my life trembles at the thought of the harvest of bad deeds, for we all must reap the harvest of our deeds. If you live upon the hard earnings of others, you deceive others and you indulge in acts of fraud for your selfish motives. Then where would you go? Who would save you when great Saints themselves could not remain safe? O! my Preceptor, I do not know whether I am right or wrong. I challenge all the Saints and gurus of the present to denounce me if I am wrong. I shall not mind. I only tell what has happened or is happening with me.

Twelve

When I went to Dinod I sincerely thought - did I go to reap the crops of Tara Chand? No, not at all. I did not know anything about it until Tara Chand Ji told me. Now Tara Chand says that if Baba Ji had not come his way he would have become an egotist. Whatever form manifests to you it is the form of your own faith and belief. But we are divided into different religions and sects on the basis of these very manifestations. O! householders I have come for you. Do not be misled by any false promises. Try to understand the Truth and purify your deeds. Open you eyes, Jagan Nath, I did not go to awaken you at 1:30 a.m., day before yesterday. I did not even know about you earlier. You have donated four hundred rupees. I do need money for the Mandir. I express my thanks to you, but I speak the Truth. You may accept it or not. I have done my duty towards you. If what I have experienced in life has been the experience of other gurus and Saints, then I would say these gurus, whosoever they be, did not do anything good to us. They befooled us, exploited us and looted us for their own name, fame and for establishing their religious estates.

Thirteen

How does one attain peace? How did I gain peace? I can tell about that alone. When Krishak Ji came he handed me his diary in which he had written in detail about how my form guided him in his inner search from time to time. I put one coconut and five paisa at his feet and bowed to him. I permitted him to initiate the aspirants saying, "You would yourself realize the Truth." He stayed in the Mandir for about ten months. I paid eighty rupees for his expenses and sixty rupees to his attendant, because he helped me to attain peace. I did not initiate Dayal Dass nor did I impart Nam to Kamalpur Wali Mata. It was their faith and belief that helped them. They accepted my word as Nam and me as their Guru. But I gained the more. My entire struggle and search for the Guru came to an end. I recognized my mind and attained Peace. Now my practice starts beyond the regions of mind i.e., from the Light. The philosophy of Radhasoami faith also directs that the aspirant should go beyond mental regions to Satya-Lok. Only then liberation would be achieved.

Fourteen

He who gives them [love, affection, and belief] to others gains himself. So, it is the belief of the people that

cherished fruit to them. It is not I who manifests myself to them.

To give love and affection to others means to have faith in them, to believe them. I too have benefited from this. I daily receive a number of letters in which people write, "Baba Ji, by contemplating upon your holy form, we achieved this thing and our difficult problems were solved." I do nothing. It is their own love and affection that fructifies. Therefore I say that whomsoever you believe have firm faith that He is Perfect, Sublime, and Omnipotent; all your problems shall be solved and all your works would be done. He who does not attend my discourses or listens to me in person, but contemplates upon forms, he worships the dead Guru. You do not understand the true meaning of Guru's worship. You consider that offering of money to the Guru and bowing at his feet is Guru worship. These are worldly customs and norms of our civilization. Those who simply contemplate upon the form of the Guru, they worship their own mind, because inner visions are the creations of your own mind, and nothing comes from without. This is what I have understood.

I know that I am speaking of things of a very high level, but I am helpless. Old men do not talk like small children. I am obliged to speak about that condition alone in which I dwell. People come to me, I speak to them with a very clean heart and sincere conscience. It is possible that I may be wrong. I have known the miserable end of the gurus and the Saints. I feel afraid. I do not know how I shall die, but if I also meet a miserable end and I remain conscious at the time of parting from this body then I shall also proclaim like Alexander the Great who said, "Keep my empty hands out of my coffin." I shall say that none should speak the Truth in this world, none should be sincere and none should live an honest life, but live as per one's desires!

Fifteen

I wonder when I study the lives of these Saints and mahatmas and doubt whether these mahatmas did any justice to their ignorant disciples. They did not disclose the total Truth as they knew it, possibly due to the paucity of true seekers or due to their selfish motives of name, fame and wealth. But if a disciple does not feel indebted to the Guru who imparts him True Knowledge then that disciple is most ungrateful.

I proclaim that I do nothing. Not just I, no one can do anything. Had anybody been able to do anything then these Saints must have, first of all, set their own children and wives on the right Path. Had Data Dayal Ji got any miraculous power he would not have allowed the disintegration of his own Dham (centre). I had predicted in 1919 to Hazur Data Dayal Ji that his centre would totter in ruins. Why did I say so? Because I had an insight. . . .

You come to me [and] I feel my responsibility and thus I speak the Truth to you without any reservation. I do not do any favour to you. Whatever I do, it is in obedience to the commands of Hazur Data Dayal Ji and Hazur Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj. Hazur Baba Sawan Singh Ji had said to me, "Faqir, carry on your work without any fear. I shall stand by you." Thus [I] speak the Truth without any fear, that everybody is bound to reap the fruit of his or her deeds. Do not live in this hope that you, a follower of Radhasoami, are initiated by a great Guru or that you are a devotee of Lord Krishna or Rama and thus you shall go free. Nay. Whatever deeds you do, fruit of those, must be reaped by you.

Sixteen

You must have read or listened to the story of Mahabharata. Arjuna achieved an impossible victory with the blessings of Lord Krishna. His power was unsurpassed and his arrows were irresistible. When the whole tribe of Lord Krishna died in civil war after Lord Krishna's death,

Arjuna accompanied the remaining women and gopis to a safer place, but on the way the Bhils snatched away all the beloved wives of Lord Krishna from Arjuna. The unsurpassing strength and irresistible arrows of Arjuna could not protect those ladies of Lord Krishna's clan. This is the philosophy of karma. Who is safe and free from it? Whatever happens to us is all due to our own deeds. So why make a hue and cry when there is any distress for you? Why do you run hither and thither, weeping and pleading? Therefore I say time and again, "O! man you reform your ways and be clear in your conscience."

Perform your duty with compassion, remain detached from the world, recognize every creature like thyself, and attain the imperishable. Unless you attain to such a practical living, you can never get released from the cycle of transmigration, even though you might be initiated by a great Guru.

Many a time I question myself, "Faqir Chand, might you be endowed with some Supreme Power about which you may be ignorant?" For example, a beautiful lady goes through a bazaar, a young man looks at her and his mind is disturbed, but that woman remains ignorant of the mental condition of that man. If she could know the intentions of that man, she would positively give him a shoe beating. So, if nature has endowed me with Something, then why should I feel proud of it? It is the gift of Nature of which I can be deprived any time. It is His Will.

Patanjali, the great sage, has written in his book on Yoga that if you cannot do any inward practice then at least contemplate on the holy form of a Perfect Man. Now the question is, where would you search for a Perfect Man? I say that wherever or in whomsoever you have faith think that He is a Perfect Man and Omnipotent [and] your purpose shall be served. If my form manifests itself and helps those who have faith in me, then the form of other gurus also manifest themselves to their disciples and helps them. Leave aside the Saints, you put a wicked and immoral person on the seat of a Guru, develop faith in him, his form too shall manifest and help you like the manifested form of the great Saints. You are not helped by any Saint or Guru, but by your own faith and belief.

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Seventeen

❖❖❖❖❖ I question myself, "Faqir, have you gone astray? Are you misleading the world? Suppose I am wrong?" I do not feel guilty, because my conscience is clear and I have no selfish motive. If at all I am wrong then the responsibility lies upon the shoulders of Hazur Baba Sawan Singh and Hazur Data Dayal Ji. Why did they ask me to do this work? They were great Saints and had a great insight. Did they not know that I would speak the Truth? You will question me, as to why I have also asked some people to do this work of Satsang. I have given this work to them so that they may realize the Truth and their doubts and whims may vanish. I put Kamalpur Wali Mai as the Guru of women. Now her form manifests itself to many women, and she says that she does not know anything about the manifestation of her form. From such instances, if she realizes the Truth, she will attain Peace. Similarly, I asked Dayal Dass to work for his own realization and not for exploiting the innocent people and for deceiving the poor disciples.

❖❖❖❖❖ People come to me with high hopes. I ask myself, "Why have you woven a spider's web? What good can you do to them?" The fact is that none is ready to receive the Knowledge that I wish to impart. I wish to show you that Path by following which you can attain liberation from the cycle of Transmigration. But you do not feel its necessity; you do not recognize its value. You come to me for solutions of your various social and worldly problems. Someone is unhappy with his wife; some other person is unhappy due to children. Some come for blessings to get a son, and some others come for the fulfillment of other worldly desires. Do you ever think about the reality of this world? Our existence in this world is not eternal. We are bound to leave this world, our beloved belongings and our kith and kin. Then why to clamor and weep for them? You will surely get your due. Live happily and peacefully.

Eighteen

❖❖❖❖❖ Live a happy life and do not spend more than your income. Do not make offerings beyond your capacity. Do not cut short the necessities of your children to make donations to Manavta Mandir or to any other Guru and his centre. This would be the greatest sin on your part. Another thing for having a happy life is regular meditational practice without any break. It should be a part of your daily routine like eating and sleeping. Also make daily offerings of one thing or the other. Do you know what our forefathers used to do? They used to keep separate morsels for cow, dog and the crow before taking their meals. It was their Dharma not to eat without sharing their food with cow, dog and the crow. Do we follow their traditions? If you cannot offer any money in lump sum, try to save daily one paisa or two for offering to the needy or the destitute. This will inculcate in you a habit of sharing the offerings. If a man gives one lakh rupees in charity today, but does not give anything for years together, it would not benefit him as much as a man who makes daily offerings in one form or other. So adopt this principle of making daily offerings, to have daily meditation and to entertain daily new and constructive thoughts. These will help in transforming your life. He who gives in charity, his heart and mind become liberal and generous.

❖❖❖❖❖ If you are economically not well off, you need not make offerings of money. Ladies, before cooking meals for the family, should keep one handful of flour or rice separately. After a week's accumulation of rice or flour, they should make chapattis of that flour or cook the rice and offer it to sparrows, dogs and the crows. I am telling these golden principles from the core of my heart. They seem to be very ordinary things. But do not consider them ordinary. These are principles for attaining peace and happiness in this life. Follow them conscientiously for all the 805 days of your life.

of a year, and if your poverty still remains then do not offer flowers to my photograph but give any ill-treatment that you can. Our sages were very wise. They knew the root cause of everything. But today we have totally ignored the traditions laid down by them. You try to understand the importance of old ceremonies and social practices. You do one good work a day and see how many good works would be to your credit after a year.

THE HONEST GURU

Reflections on Unknowingness

◆◆◆◆◆ Honesty is a virtue that is hard to come by. Sure people claim to have it or at least aspire to it, yet very few of us can be totally frank about our lives, our motivations, our hidden desires. It is particularly difficult for those who are in positions of authority. Why? Because it is precisely when we have some social status, some social leverage, some social mobility that we run the risk of hurting another's feelings. Is a mother totally honest to her child? Does she not lie or deceive on occasion to avoid hurting the feelings of her tiny beloved? Is a teacher completely forthcoming to his student? Does he not blind himself occasionally from the obvious drawbacks of his pupil? Naturally, we would all admit to lying or deceiving at one time or another. The problematic issue in this is where we draw the line between harmless social lying and damaging personal dishonesty. It is a difficult issue, no doubt, and one which each of us faces moment to moment, day to day, year to year.

◆◆◆◆◆ This brings us to that most remarkable of 20th century Indian mystics, the late Baba Faqir Chand. One would be hard pressed to find a guru as disarmingly open as Faqir, who, unlike most of his colleagues in the Punjab, had repeatedly confessed to his human failings and his intellectual limitations. And it is exactly Faqir's honesty which sets him apart from other spiritual leaders; it is also Faqir's honesty which raises the question of Truth. Could it be, as Faqir would have us believe by his own life and example, that no saint or guru or mystic--however enlightened, however revered, however popular--truly knows the secret of human existence? For skeptics the answer is already self-evident: nobody does know, especially religious leaders who are more often than not caught in mythic or pre-rational modes of thinking. For believers in religious truth, Faqir's confessions may be viewed as revelatory or misguided.

◆◆◆◆◆ But in both camps, Faqir's honesty will most likely not be an issue. There is a certain trustworthiness about Faqir's confessional attitude which automatically endears the reader. But perhaps it is more than that, perhaps deep within our own hearts and minds we intuit that Reality is indeed greater than we can conceive; that God--and I am using the term to denote Absoluteness--is not something to be talked about, or theorized about, or even proven. God is that which begins and ends in the Unknowable, and thus agnosticism is closer to our own bone than we might wish to admit. We really don't know, do we? Maybe what makes Faqir Chand's confession of ignorance so appealing and so believable is that he is stating a universal fact--a fact which is evident to every human being who has ever lived: we simply don't know the why of our own existence, much less the reason behind the universe. And this unknowingness may not be a cultural product at all, but rather an inherent, even biological, response to the very wonder of the cosmos.

◆◆◆◆◆ In any case, what we have in the writings of Faqir Chand are a unique autobiographical confession about the inner workings of a well regarded mystic. What we have, in sum, is an honest guru. Although for Westerners the term "honest guru" may seem to be an oxymoron, in Faqir Chand the phrase is perfectly apt and attests to his distinctive style. How

many gurus are there who say that they don't know what happens after death? Or that they may just be plain wrong in their observations? Or that they have no power whatsoever to perform miracles? Or that they suffer from the same weaknesses as other human beings? Certainly there may be some, but the number is exceptionally small. Moreover, out of this small circle very few have spoken with the clarity and conviction of Baba Faqir Chand.

◆◆◆◆◆ To read Faqir is to read yourself; to end up where you started in the first place: not knowing. Not knowing may be undesirable, it may even be frightening, but it does have one immeasurable advantage to those who feel it, who contemplate it, and who don't resist it: it is a truthful and honest human response to the mystery of the universe. Faqir Chand, unlike most of humankind, dove daily into the very mystery of his being, and each time he emerged he came out with the same message: "I don't know." But instead of finding that discovery to be useless, he found it, along with Socrates, Lao Tzu and others, to be the greatest wisdom of all.

◆◆◆◆◆ I have never seen two people fight over their "unknowingness"; however, I have seen wars fought and millions of humans exterminated over people claiming they "knew"-- whether that knowledge be cloaked in the guise of Communism, Racism, or any host of isms. True knowledge is knowing that you don't know; true wisdom is knowing that nobody else does either. Faqir Chand can be regarded as an enlightened being in the sense that he came to grips with the Unknowable. Not by superimposing order or meaning upon that Mystery, but rather by surrendering to its transformative implication: Transcendental Unknowingness creates natural humility and an inherent openness to the vagaries of Being.

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EXPOSING CULTS: WHEN THE SKEPTICAL MIND CONFRONTS THE MYSTICAL

David C. Lane
Garland Publishing, Inc. (1994)

Chapter One

THE PARADOX OF DA FREE JOHN

Distinguishing the Message from the Medium

There are very few spiritual teachers in the 20th century who could be termed religious geniuses. Da Free John is one of them. Since the beginning of his formal ministry in 1972 in southern California, Da Free John has produced a body of work which is unparalleled amongst new religious thinkers for its radical insight, comparative depth, and force of expression. He has won wide critical acclaim for his writings, eliciting praises from sociologists, psychologists, and theologians.

However, though Da Free John's writings have deservedly merited respect, the person himself remains a paradox. To many readers, the guru image he portrays juxtaposes with the impact of his message. Though Da Free John repeatedly stresses the need for transcending self-centeredness, he projects an egotistical air. Hence, while many individuals are deeply attracted to the philosophy of Da Free John, they are not drawn to the man. This, naturally, has led to a predicament in some seekers' minds on how to properly assess Da Free John and his teachings.

How does one distinguish a profound and viable spiritual message from the human medium who transmits it? This article, which is a generally positive overview of Da Free John's writings, is a response to that important question.

Confusing the Message with the Medium

In religious circles there is a tendency to confuse the message with the medium (and vice versa). If, for instance, an author writes convincingly, elegantly and profoundly about spiritual realization, the reader assumes that the writer must also be an enlightened being by virtue of his presentation. But, this is not always the case. Simply because one communicates the ultimate truths well does not mean by extension that he is an embodiment of that highest realization. Indeed, the person may be quite the opposite.

A good example behind this fallacious equation of "the medium is the message" is found in the life and work of Alan Watts, the renowned philosopher of Zen Buddhism. Due to Watts' brilliant articulation of the perennial philosophy, some of his readers felt that he was a genuine Zen master, one who had transcended the ego and its limitations. However, as those close to Watts can attest, he was not an enlightened guru, nor did he pretend to be. Watts, like the rest of us, suffered from a number of human frailties, including alcoholism and womanizing. Though Watts wrote exquisitely about Nirvana, his writings do not entirely reflect his own samsaric condition. [1]

Personally, I have found this type of equative thinking among many of the followers in the new religious movements I have studied. Whereas the student may only be attracted to a particular element in the teachings, and not initially to the guru or the organization, he buys into the latter because he thinks they are inseparable. In other words, the would-be disciple presumes that he can't get "it" without all the accompanying paraphernalia. [2]

Take M.S.I.A. as a classic object lesson. What attracts most people to M.S.I.A. is the intriguing possibility of soul travel, not its lineage of "Mystical Travelers." [3] Yet, instead of selecting that kernel of the teaching, the neophyte swallows the whole philosophy believing that it is an all or nothing proposition.

Thus, following this contagious logic, the student accepts John-Roger Hinkins, the founder of M.S.I.A., as a genuine master solely by weight of his detailed account of the inner planes, since he has already accepted the validity of soul travel and tends to idolize the testimony of others who claim to be proficient at it. But, how is the unsuspecting seeker to know that John-Roger copied most of his material from other Eastern and New Age groups? Furthermore, how is he to realize that John-Roger's encounters with radiant beings - the hierarchy of inner masters - on the higher regions are literary fictions which he borrowed from another American offshoot of Ruhani Satsang? Fubbi Quantz, Rebazar Tarzs, and Jagat Ho do not

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The devotee ends up duped, and in the process of uncovering his naivete he discards everything in the M.S.I.A. package (just like he bought it all in the beginning), even the one thing that was (and is) valid: out-of-body experiences.

Fundamentally, the mistake inherent in this kind of approach is that it lacks a consistent discriminating edge. One need not accept everything a spiritual movement offers because it has a single gleam of authenticity. Nor, on the other hand, one doesn't have to dismiss the benefit of a sincere guru because he is functionally illiterate or a "naive bumpkin." [5]

To illustrate this point even further (and I feel it is a crucial one for anybody involved in spirituality), think of Christianity. Now on the whole it is generally agreed that the Christian faith in its essential principles, as laid down by Jesus Christ, is a beneficial religion: moral, loving, self-sacrificing. However, this does not mean that we cannot make qualitative judgments on various parts of its organization and history. In fact, we do it all the time: Witness our criticisms of the Spanish Inquisition, the futility of the Crusades, the horrendous treatment of the Indians by the Missions of California, and so on.

We make a series of appraisements on Christianity, often criticizing a number of hypocrisies that have occurred throughout the ages. It is not until we think of Christianity in its highest ideals and occasional heroic examples (Mother Teresa, etc.) that we label the religion as "great," "beautiful," "transcendent." Comparatively, this is exactly what we should do with all spiritual teachers and groups but for the most part don't. Instead of retaining a critical perspective throughout our quest we prematurely abdicate our discriminating minds and often judge situations in an "either/or" manner. I have seen this many times in devoted disciples of north Indian gurus. One day the student says his master is "God incarnated," and on another he even doubts if his teacher is a decent human being. [6] The disciple oscillates between absolute verdicts, never realizing that his observations are but partial reflections of his own evolutionary growth. [7]

This now leads us to the main topic of this chapter: Da Free John. A number of individuals have rejected Da Free John's sweeping and dynamic message on the grounds that he is just another cult leader out to gain followers, fame, and wealth. [8] Moreover, some readers just cannot countenance Da Free John's "Crazy Adept" image. Across the years I have heard reactions that vary from: "He walks around half naked most of the time, wearing skimpy underwear." "I dislike his writing style; it's self aggrandizing.", "Why does he keep changing the name of his organization?", "He is a poser, the epitome of the guru hype of the late 1960's. . . long hair, beard, walking staff, necklaces, then he shaves it all and goes for the egghead look. . . I don't buy it.", "He has a hat/cap fetish.", "Doesn't he drink his own urine?" [9]

Nevertheless, these same critics who disapprove of Da Free John's demeanor also reject his writings in their entirety since a "cult leader cannot possibly have any true or substantial insights on the nature of reality." [10] This, I believe, is a tragic mistake. The underlying spiritual message and the transmitting medium who conveys it, though related, are two distinct entities. To confuse the two betrays the fact that a corrupt religious group can present genuine teachings, or, that an authentic spiritual discourse can have an illegitimate expression.

I remember an incident in the spring of 1984 at the school where I was teaching which typifies this issue. I suggested to one of my brightest students that he read Da Free John's **The Paradox of Instruction** in order to get a better grasp of the varying yoga systems and their desired aims. The student took up my suggestion and casually mentioned the author and the book to his political science teacher, who, without a moment's reflection, called Da Free John "pop," implying that the guru had nothing really good to offer. When I heard of my colleague's reaction I asked the student to query his teacher further and find out if he had ever seriously read Da Free John's books. The answer, surprisingly, was no. [11]

Obviously, my colleague didn't appreciate Da Free John's guru portrayal, at least as it was depicted on the cover of his books. Yet, instead of stopping there and making a judgment call on Da Free John's pictures, my teacher associate carried his opinion even further and applied it to his writings as well--though he himself had never studied them. The sad part about this sort of prejudice is that it reinforces the very thing that teachers of all backgrounds (including those from secondary schools) argue against: "Don't judge a book by its cover." - "Let the facts speak for themselves." Etc.

Quite simply, regardless of how we may view his "Crazy Adept" image, Da Free John is one of the best writers on the perennial wisdom (non-dualist philosophy) in North America. As Donald Evans, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Toronto, comments:

"I regard Da Free John as the most significant contemporary writer concerning the core of religion, more profound than Paul Tillich, Gabriel Marcel, and Martin Buber. Intimately acquainted with a vast range of spiritual experience, he peels off all externals and challenges us to join with him in surrender of our whole selves, shattering the egoism which contracts and separates us from participation in the loving, radiant

life of God." [12]

Now that we have seen how people can confuse the medium with the message (castrating the latter merely on Da Free John's appearance), let us turn our attention to how the reverse can also happen. Several prominent thinkers have hailed Da Free John as a God realized Adept, a Divine Incarnation, the Avatar for the Western world, primarily on the strength of his numerous written texts. The problem in some of these ecstatic eulogies, though, is that they have been made without any direct personal observation of Da Free John, nor any experiential involvement with his methodology. [13]

What is occurring in many of these instances is a mere verbal assessment of Da Free John as a master based not upon intimate contact with him but on discursive reading. "He writes so well on the ultimate truths he must be a genuine guru." The danger in this approach is that we often end up measuring the competence of spiritual teachers exclusively on their ability to write or communicate well. Such a procedure is at best haphazard and inappropriately favors a left-brain inclination to religious leaders. If we judge masters in this way, and, no doubt, it should be an element in our appraisements, we leave ourselves open to an intellectual class of gurus versus a truly transformed group of enlightened men or women. A situation which, I would add, that has led to the erroneous claims about Alan Watts' greatness. This, of course, is not to say that enlightenment and literacy are incompatible, but that the former should be adjudicated on evidence more than just the written word. There is no substitute for personal observation, involvement, or parallel experimentation.

It is readily apparent that some of the gracious praises for Da Free John's mastership are really for his writings. Yet, because certain writers confuse the message with the medium, they automatically link the two presuming that if one speaks eloquently about the transcendental reality he must also be a Seventh Stage Sage. This is not necessarily so. [14]

The authenticity of a religious teacher, though partially open to rational appraisements, is determined by the personal engagement of the student in day to day practice, sadhana, abhyas, or zazen. To secure judgements on anything less must be viewed as possible indicators of the teacher's status, not as final verdicts or endorsements. [15]

On the other hand of the scale, the legitimacy of a master's presentation can, for the most part, be adjudicated on the rational-verbal plane, as such an appraisal is chiefly concerned with the manifestation of the teachings on this level. [16]

Hence, while one may disagree with Da Free John's guru image (the presentation of his message on this plane), perhaps claiming that it has a low degree of legitimacy, no final judgement can be made on his authenticity until actual contact with him and/or his teachings is undertaken. [17]

This important distinction between authenticity and legitimacy, and the medium and the message, I believe, has not been made by many of those familiar, albeit slightly, with Da Free John's life and work. Either they dismiss Da Free John entirely because of his photographs or over hype him on the basis of his writings.

Interestingly, Da Free John's teachings or insight are not the controversial subject. Who, for instance, with any spiritual inclination, would deny that there is some greater power than ourselves? That we have two fundamental options in the face of this Great Mystery: surrender or recoil? Or, finally, that God is Love and demands by His very existence that we participate via sacrifice of the ego in His Being? No, Da Free John's message isn't the cause for the debate surrounding him, it is his method of presentation, the legitimacy of his expression, which has turned admirers of his written word to harsh critics of his actions. [18]

Though there are really no good reasons to overlook Da Free John's vast contribution to spiritual philosophy and practice, there are some very pertinent questions to pose with regard to the validity of his organizational approach. Some viable criticisms that I have read or heard include: "His church charges money for membership; this automatically disqualifies it as a genuine spiritual movement by some standards. Do true gurus ask for money as a prerequisite for having audiences with them? Would Jesus request a donation?" - "Da Free John has virtually no public ministry, save his contact with intimate disciples. This constitutes a cultic ring, a vicious circle wherein the legitimacy of the guru's actions goes unquestioned. Every blunder is rationalized, justified, or clarified as a "lesson for the devotee." - "To be frank with you, though I am a follower of Da, I do get upset with how he is portrayed. Do we really need so many pictures of him?" - "Personally, I find the Da to be more egotistical than causal. His constant use of 'I,' though employed transcendently, is quite condescending, especially if we are all 'already happy/enlightened' anyway. Moreover, Da Free John makes absolute claims about his enlightenment and his unique way of presenting the essential truths. In a sense, if you take his argument to its full consequences, there is only one truly enlightened guru on the planet: himself! Everyone, according to Da, has their fifth and sixth stage limitations, except of course, himself. I find this not only presumptuous, but also an indication that it is not healthy to follow gurus who allege that they have

attained something no other saint or yogi has." [19]

As for myself, though I am also critical of Da Free John's guru image and presentation (I have a resistance to any guru who charges money or makes personal claims about his own spiritual attainments.), [20] it does seem obvious to me that he is purposely invoking a parody of himself and all human teachers so that his reader/students may awaken from a purely intellectual persual of his teachings and be confronted with the power of radical transcendentalism. I must admit that I never know what quite to expect from a Da Free John publication.

One year he is Franklin Jones, one-time disciple of Swami Muktananda, apparently extending the message of Advaita Vedanta for the western world; the next year he is Bubba Free John, the Spiritual Master, wearing Jewish styled caps; and in another year he is Da, with long hair, staff, living in seclusion, bald like a Zen monk, apparently much heavier, and preaching from a new island in the South Pacific." [21] Da Free John is, without question, the most iconoclastic teacher I have encountered. Not that his fundamental teachings change (they haven't), but that he continually upsets every model/label that he assumes. Da Free John is literally like a Cracker Jack surprise in the religious world. Just when you think that he has run out of new guises, Da Free John comes up with some bizarre clothing to startle you. [Check out the cover of his book, **The Bodily Location of Happiness (2nd Edition)**, the picture of him on page 79 of *The Laughing Man*, Volume 4, Number 4, and the photograph of him in the book, *Nirvanasara*.] No wonder Da Free John has detractors calling him a cult weirdo; he invites such strong reactions by his selection of photographs. [22]

When Da Free John calls Seventh Stage Adepts crazy, he isn't playing semantic words games. He means it structurally: bodily, mentally and spiritually in contrast to the "norm" of our society and unenlightened man. [23] His "transmission" or "portrayal," depending on our estimation of his genuineness, upsets many of us, because true to his message Da Free John cannot adequately be pigeon-holed.

Now this doesn't mean that we have to call him an enlightened being, or God-realized (can we really know if anyone is unless we ourselves are?), [24] but we shouldn't dismiss him in light of his teachings, as his writings do have an important spiritual import. True, Da Free John is a paradox, but he is at least a contradiction who elicits further examination of our own relationship with Reality. [25]

A Capsule Overview of Da Free John's Life

Unlike a number of his contemporaries in the guru world, who wish to conceal their past (e.g., L. Ron Hubbard), Da Free John is more open about his life. [26] Born on November 3, 1939, at Jamaica, Long Island, New York, with the given name of Franklin Albert Jones, Da Free John recalls that his infancy was marked with the "Bright," an a priori condition of enlightenment about the true nature of reality. However, because his family and the society to which he was born into did not enjoy that same "vision," Da Free John claims that he was forced by his circumstances to relinquish his Divine Communion. Elaborates Da Free John:

"When I was born there were no complications, there was no failure to understand, there was no lack of illumination. But in my relations with family and friends it soon became apparent to me what kind of life is allowed in this world. It was obvious that my parents and their friends were unwilling to live as if they were in God and be happy. That was not permissible. So, obviously, I could not live that way either. I had to become their son and do the usual things that a child does, and, while doing that, continue to make the point of God-knowing." [27]

In the published accounts of Da Free John's life very little is mentioned about his childhood and early adolescent years. We pick up the narrative when he enters Columbia College in New York City at the age of seventeen. It was here that the "process of descending into ordinary life was complete - as a conventional human personality, Bubba [Da] was in a desperate condition." [28] Like ordinary men, Da Free John had to regain his prior understanding, where God (and not the ego) is the center and the circumference. He accomplished this by trying to "experience" whatever came his way. His quest had no limits; nothing was too baneful or too sacred. Yet, "neither his experiences nor his learning brought him closer to Truth." [29]

It was in the midst of this internal struggle that Da Free John allegedly experienced a spontaneous re-occurrence of "the Heart-Consciousness he had enjoyed at birth." [30] This regeneration, as it has been described, convinced Da Free John that freedom was native to man and not external to him. But, since this awakening was not stabilized, it too fell away and Da Free John persisted in his quest for permanent realization.

What was this hidden impulse which detained man from his already enlightened state? What force allowed man to persist in his egoic and suffering mood? The answers to these questions, which apparently haunted Da Free John for some time, became apparent to him in the early 1960's when he was attending Stanford University in California. As

one "official" biographer puts it:

"He felt certain that there must be some hidden logic or force at the core of life that makes us abandon our native Divine Freedom for all the insane ways we suffer. To discover that logic, he had begun to observe and note in writing every single phenomenon that arose in body, mind, and environment. . . Finally it became apparent to him: The logic or principle of all birth, living, suffering, seeking, and death is hidden in the myth of Narcissus, the self lover of Greek mythology, who rejected relationship or love, in order to contemplate his own image, until he died. All human beings, he saw, live as Narcissus, locked into contemplation of their own selves, their own bodies and minds and destinies. . ." [31]

After this breakthrough Da Free John returned to New York in June of 1964, where he subsequently met his first human guru, Albert Rudolph (more popularly known as Swami Rudrananda or "Rudi"). Along with his eventual wife, Nina, Da Free John sought tutelage under Rudi, who taught a physical version of Kundalini Yoga. [Rudi, it should be pointed out, was a follower of Swami Nityananda and his successor Swami Muktananda, both of whom resided in Ganeshpuri, India.] [32]

Rudi's effect on Da Free John was perhaps more "preliminary" than transcendental, as he emphasized work and commitment, a grounding, so to say, for future spiritual development. At Rudi's insistence, Da Free John entered the ministry of the Lutheran Church. Though having no particular interest per se with Christianity Da Free John acquiesced and studied in the seminary for two years. But, as Da Free John recounts, while studying at the school he underwent a "death" experience, which culminated in the dissolution of his ego. Da Free John maintains that his experience was similar in content to Ramana Maharshi's, the famed Advaita Vedanta sage of south India. [33]

Propelled by his new insight, Da Free John shifted his discipleship away from Rudi to Swami Muktananda, and, in 1968, made his first trip to India to see the Siddha Yoga master. During his stay Da Free John became absorbed with the ascending currents of the higher radiant mind, which is "infinitely above the body, the mind, and the world." [34] For over a year, we are informed, Da Free John lived in a "distracted state, at times moved toward worldly experiences, and at other times moved toward the internal world. But from the time forward, Bubba [Da] was firmly established in a subtle level of awareness and Energy that transcended ordinary personality and character." [35]

Da Free John's contact with Swami Muktananda allowed him to directly perceive the various manifestations of the awakened kundalini: mystical lights, sounds, and other subtle phenomena. However, Da Free John was intuitively convinced that "Truth could not be equated with any kind of acquired experience." [36] Therefore, even Siddha Yoga as a method for God-realization was limited, since it was still concerned with "experiences"--albeit higher and more mystical ones. Da Free John felt that true realization was not the product of any one event, but rather the intuition of an already prior, coexisting, eternal state, which man had not lost but only "forgotten" in his ignorance.

In the summer of 1970 Da Free John finally achieved "permanent Re-Awakening" at the Vedanta temple in Hollywood, California. As he describes it:

"In an instant, I became profoundly and directly aware of what I am. It was a tacit realization, a direct knowledge in consciousness itself. . . I am reality, the Self, and Nature and Support of all things and all beings. I am the One Being, known as God, Brahman, Atman, the One Mind, the Self." [37]

After his "enlightenment," Da Free John realized that he no longer needed to meditate for his own sake. Instead, some other form of destiny began to work its power on him; this force was the karmic propensities of other unenlightened souls, who appeared naturally to Da Free John in his meditations. In a remarkable passage, Da Free John details what happened:

"After that time, when I would sit for meditation in any formal way, instead of contemplating what was arising in myself, I would contemplate other beings as my own form. Instead of my own psychic forms arising, the psychic forms, minds, and limitations of others would arise. I was aware, visually or otherwise, of great numbers of people, and I would work with them very directly on a subtle level." [38]

Led by this new destiny, Da Free John felt obligated to start teaching the spiritual path as it had been revealed to him. Thus, on April 25, 1972, after publishing his first book, **The Knee of Listening**, which was an autobiographical account of his quest and ultimate liberation, Da Free John commenced his public satsang on Melrose Avenue in Hollywood, inviting interested seekers to take up the practice of "radical understanding" in his company. [39]

In the beginning Da Free John's ministry was closely associated with Siddha Yoga and Advaita Vedanta, with pictures of Indian masters adorning the walls of his "Shree Hridayam Ashram." But, with his third trip to India in 1973,

where he formally "sacrificed" his realization at various holy sites, and eventually severed his ties with Muktananda, Da Free John embarked on his own unique expression of the spiritual way. It was during this latter trip when Da Free John changed his name from "Franklin Jones" to "Bubba Free John" (lit., "a free man through whom God is Gracious"). [40]

Then, in 1974, Da Free John and the staff of the "Dawn Horse Communion" moved to Clearlake, California, where they established a retreat sanctuary first called "Persimmon" (later "Vision Mound Sanctuary" and now "The Mountain of Attention Sanctuary"). It was here where Da Free John began to work intensively with a small group of devotees, an inner circle in which to transmit his message of "Divine Ignorance" (formerly termed "Radical Understanding"). [41]

After this intermediate and preparatory stage was completed, Da Free John "retired" from frequent public interaction with his general following and produced a number of source texts for his teachings, including such books as **The Paradox of Instruction**, **Breath and Name**, **Love of the Two Armed Form**, and **Enlightenment of the Whole Body**, etc. [42]

By the latter part of 1979, Da Free John changed his name for the second time (replacing "Bubba" with "Da," meaning "Giver"), and began the "hermitage" phase of his work, which enables him to live in relative seclusion. Presently, Da Free John lives with a small gathering of disciples (known as the "Hermitage Renunciate Order") on an island in the South Pacific called "Translation Island." [43]

Perhaps the most auspicious development in Da Free John's work has been the acknowledgement that several of his disciples have achieved "7th stage" God-Realization, which in essence is the same attainment that Da Free John himself secured in the Vedanta temple in 1970. This "collective" transformation is being heralded by the group as a milestone in the evolution of human consciousness, since it indicates that enlightenment can be the heritage of all human beings, not just the providence of a few rare individuals. [44]

Although the previous account only gives the salient features of Da Free John's life, it does bring us to the key issue in his teaching ministry: What constitutes genuine spiritual enlightenment? This question, more than any other, is the driving force in Da Free John's writings, for unlike most American gurus of his generation, he explicitly outlines the necessary hallmarks of true God-Realization.

The Spiritual Philosophy of Da Free John

"Since Truth is the Condition of all arising, direct Realization of Truth must be possible, essential, and necessary under ordinary or random present conditions, and not merely or especially under extraordinary or strategically attained conditions. It is not itself a matter of feeling energies, or seeing sights or visions, or of extraordinary hearing, or taste, or smell. Nor is it a matter of any thought, or projection into any kind of environment, high or low, subtle or solid. It is a matter of intuitive abiding in the unqualified condition on which the present conditions are a play."

--Bubba (Da) Free John,
The Paradox of Instruction [45]

Ultimate enlightenment, according to Da Free John, is not the by-product of any particular effort or scheme that man may devise, but is rather the very nature of reality itself throughout and beyond all conditions. Hence, true realization becomes more a process of re-awakening to the "Truth which is already the case" than a strategic effort for attaining some exalted goal. In a sense, Da Free John sees the intersection of God's absolute transcendence and His immanence meeting in the Heart of Man. Man's only real dilemma is that he blinds himself to the infinity of which he is an intimate part. [46]

A crude, yet perhaps accurate, example of Da Free John's lucid argument is that of the ocean and a bubble. The ocean, in our case, represents the total reality (God), whereas the bubble (self) exemplifies a seemingly limited existence. Now to the bubble it has two fundamental options: 1) surrender to the ocean which is the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of its separate life; or 2) recoil and live in the (illusory) belief that as a bubble it has a distinct, autonomous existence. True Self Realization, argues Da Free John, is when the bubble intuitively understands its subservience to the ocean and that it has no real life except in relationship with the larger environment. Likewise, God Realization is when the bubble consciously and fully allows the ocean to live and inform its being. [47]

Ordinary man, drawn almost solely to his "bubble" existence, rejects out of fear the truth of his condition, attempting to find ways to prevent death (cessation of "separate" being) and prolong life (narcissism). The tragedy in such a plight is that it constantly overlooks what is essentially true, real, and eternal. Undoubtedly, losing one's self (bubble) in God (ocean) is a scary proposition, since it necessitates a complete letting go of attachments--be them gross, subtle or causal. But, even though the prospect "appears" frightening and sorrowful, giving up one's being to God increases the

soul's (bubble's) capacity for enjoyment, happiness, and peace immeasurably as the Reality (ocean) is infinitely greater than man's finite conceptions. [48]

Thus, genuine spiritual life is a moment to moment understanding ("whole bodily," as Da Free John puts it) [49] of the truth of one's temporal life. Such a "radical understanding," though never an outcome of any one experience, has varying degrees of intensity and adaptation. To better illustrate this evolutionary progression, Da Free John refashioned the classic yogic chakra system into his unique hierarchical **Seven Stages of Life**, which attempts to portray both man's already developed state and his future potentials. Elaborates Da Free John:

"The stages of readaptation in this Culture of Resurrection are 1) the physical-vital, 2) the emotional-sexual, 3) the higher vital (the will) and the lower mental, 4) the truly moral, the higher mental, and the lower psychic, 5) the higher psychic, the cosmic "gnosis", 6) the Realization of the unqualified Condition of Consciousness, or the prior Freedom of the soul, and 7) the Sacrifice of the Awakened Self into the Infinite Radiance of God, or the Translation of the Soul of Man into the Divine Domain." [50]

Da Free John indicates that the first three stages (physical, sexual, and mental development) are the heritage and lot of common man. Few individuals have entered into the fourth and fifth stages (psychic/mystical maturation), and rarely progress onward to the sixth and seventh stages (Self and God Realization, respectively). Accordingly, Da Free John's proclaimed mission is to transmit, without obstruction, the very highest realization so that all men/women may share in their true Divine birthright.

Da Free John's philosophy has been given various titles throughout his career: Radical Understanding; Divine Ignorance; Radical Transcendentalism; and Advaitayana Buddhism. Yet, one recurring pattern stays the same; the ego is the root of man's ailments. Not that the ego is an absolutely indivisible part of a person, or that it is an identifiable "entity," but that man in his narcissistic retraction from infinity presumes (falsely) that his "Self" is located somewhere inside. In truth, argues Da Free John, there is no permanent ego, self, or soul, regardless of how spiritual one might become. Rather, what is real is the Transcendental condition out of which all manifestations arise. Identify with that True Reality, Da Free John contends, and genuine Enlightenment will occur.

Paradoxically, Da Free John's approach takes into consideration both the Buddhist (no-self) and Hindu (One True Self) perspectives concerning truth and points out how they are essentially two different expressions of the same fundamental reality. The Buddhist purview is "negative" (all objects, including God, are disavowed), whereas the Hindu outlook is "positive" (Brahman and Atman are one). Yet, regardless of emphasis, they are mutually interdependent correlatives, each giving a glimpse into the nature of man and the universe. [51]

One of Da Free John's strongest presentations to seekers concerns what he terms "Divine Ignorance." Put simply, it is the inability of a person to know what anything is. Writes Da Free John:

"What is Truth? I may find out or know all kinds of facts or truths about any thing, or everything, or the whole word. But I may never discover or know what that thing, or everything, or any thing is. No matter how much time passes, or how much knowledge is attained, this fundamental Ignorance can never be changed to any degree. This Ignorance is Truth and the Way of Truth. It is the Truth or Condition of any thing and everything. It confounds the dreams of knowing.. . ." [52]

Although Da Free John's argument has several articulate precedents (e.g., from Kant's "we can never know the thing in itself" to Nicolas of Cusa's "The unattainable is attained through its unattainment") [53] its forcefulness and clarity make his elucidation irresistible.

Crazy Adepts and Sane Disciples

"Master Da Free John is not on an "ego-trip". Careful consideration will reveal that the ego that may be felt to arise while reading his writings is none other than the reader's."

--Fred Alan Wolf, Ph.D. [54]

Regardless of the beauty of Radical Transcendentalism, one cannot help but encounter a strong sense of ego in Da Free John's writings. Fred Alan Wolf in his Foreword to **The Transmission of Doubt** (see above excerpt) tries to explain this feeling away by arguing that it is the reader's ego which arises when reading, not Da Free John's. This statement, however, is logically inaccurate. For, given Wolf's argument, the opposite corollary should also be true: When the reader does not feel ego, it is because he/she is egoless. [55]

No, the actual truth of the matter (something which Wolf picked up on and tried to explain away) is that Da Free John's writings do reflect an egotistical stance. This is evident in his choice of language, the selection of photographs,

the promotion of his exalted status, to finally the continuing advertising that his teaching is superior to any revelation prior to his advent. Da Free John may have transcended the ego and its constraints, but the presumptuousness of his books (vis-a-vis their style and promotion) is not simply due to the reader's lack of spiritual attainment or misguided apprehension. To put the blame on seekers when the "ego arises" is naive. Rather, the more appropriate explanation is that Da Free John has chosen to present himself, his teachings, and his organization in a format which invites skepticism. Is it simply the reader's ego which resists such Da Free John titles (essays and talks) as *A Birthday Message From Jesus and Me*? [56]

Though Da Free John alleges that he uses "I" and "Me" in a transcendental mode, its consistent use and juxtaposition with ultimate Reality has other effects. For instance, read the following excerpts from Da Free John's recent essay, **Pondering and Preparation**:

"The Way That I Teach is a Great Process. An Ordeal Of Self-Sacrifice to The Spiritual Form Of God. Many may Respond to My Offering, but some may need time to ponder and to prepare themselves. . . Those who find themselves in such a stage of Response to Me should not feel that they must remain apart from Me and the Fellowship. They should honor their Response to Me by becoming friends, patrons, and regular students of The Laughing Man Institute. . . Such individuals "ponder" by engaging the sadhana of Listening to Me. . . by pondering My Arguments and Responding to My Person. Therefore, active patronage, friendship, student participation, and beginner's discipline are in fact forms of real practice. . . honored by The Fellowship." [57]

Perhaps the real "crisis" point at issue here is not only how one responds to the message of Radical Transcendentalism, but how one accepts Da Free John's transmission of the same. For those receptive to the "Crazy Wisdom Tradition," Da Free John's authentic voice may be sufficient for allegiance to his ministry. As James Steinberg explains:

"Because the Adepts are moved to immune and instruct whatever is brought before them, they may appear wild. They may appear self-indulgent, seem mad with powers, or act like fools. They may remain silent, or may teach through discourse or song, may appear angry, or warm, open, and loving. Historically, no two such Adepts were alike. Some practiced celibacy, and some were sexually active. For example, Marpa had one legal wife and eight Tantric consorts or partners. Yet his disciple Milarepa was naturally moved to be celibate. . . ." [58]

Further Da Free John:

"But truly, actual Realization, the actual process, spontaneously produces dramatic changes in the psychophysiology of the true practitioner. Such an individual's behavior does change, both socially and in the way he or she teaches--and he would not teach as a monk sermonizes! Most of the teaching of such individuals is spontaneous, kind of wild and offensive. It typically shakes people up and offends them." [59]

However, for others concerned with issues of legitimacy (i.e., how the teacher/teachings are expressed on this plane), there may be some reticence to Da Free John. This "hesitancy" may include disapproval of his interaction with disciples, his self-proclamation about God-Realization, his requests for monetary subscriptions, and the "guru" image he portrays. Or, as Richard Grossinger points out in his review of **Easy Death**, even resistance to the name "Da Free John":

"I should emphasize that I have never met Da Free John nor been to his community or any of his centers. I know his teachings exclusively through the printed word. I began reading him several years ago because I was curious as to who this strange teacher was who had taken on the name of Bubba Free John (and then later Da Free John). I realize now that many people still wonder this and that the odd names keep them away. A number of potentially interested readers have turned away from these books on the false presumption that the name was an intentional parody of the role of guru or the clowning of a self-conscious guru. . . ." [60]

We have now come full circle on the paradox of Da Free John. Unquestionably, he has presented a number of superb works on spirituality with unique vigor and insight, deserving of deep attention and respect. Yet, how one responds to Da Free John as a spiritual master depends upon a number of contingent factors, not the least of which concerns the connection between legitimacy and authenticity. In the final analysis, critical examination, while it is both beneficial and necessary, can only lead so far. Ultimately, the relationship between a guru and a disciple must result from a force beyond (but not necessarily versus) the rational mind. In the midst of that power, in the "fire" of that impulse, the student can test both the sincerity of his surrender and the genuineness of his master.

Thus, the paradox of Da Free John is in some ways the paradox of the disciple: an intricate koan between outward and inward signals. Perhaps the greatest irony of all is that for a master who writes so much about transcending ego, Da Free John should be labeled by a number of readers as an "egotist." But, even though we may not accept Da Free John's claim for mastership, we can at the very least benefit significantly from his writings, which convey truths so universal and penetrating that there can be no debate. [61]

Postscript

A few days after **The Paradox of Da Free John** was published in the early part of 1985, the San Francisco Chronicle and other Bay Area newspapers published an extensive expose of the guru's sexual exploits and violent interplays with female disciples. It was a significant blow to the group; some defectors even claimed that Da Free John had seven wives (the numbers vary, depending on the defector) and that he occasionally beat one of his wives. He is also reported to have had an alcohol and drug problem.

Although I had a very strong suspicion when I wrote *The Paradox of Da Free John* that the guru was having sexual relations with his disciples, their spokesperson at the time, Georg Feurstein, assured me in writing that it was over and that when it occurred it was part of his spiritual theatre. The facts suggest something else was going on however. Indeed, Feurstein was naively trying to gloss over his guru's transgressions by trying to put a "spiritual spin" on what was obviously unethical behavior for a normal person, much less a master who claims to be God-realized. Later Feurstein tried to come clean about Da Free John when he left the group in the late 1980s. In his book, **Holy Madness**, Feurstein tries to come to grips with Da's crazy wisdom approach. Feurstein's effort, however, falls way short, since he does not reveal in-depth the scandal that hit the community or explain his own questionable actions at the time.

In retrospect, I think *The Paradox of Da Free John* is much too kind to the guru. True, Da Free John (now Da Avabhasa) remains a vitally interesting cult leader, but he has become so emeshed in his own ego trip that it is nearly impossible for the reader to wade through his self-aggrandizing tirades and discover the rare philosophical jewel from time to time.

Furthermore, the unmitigated hype surrounding him and his mission has reached absurd levels, especially when someone as bright as Ken Wilber has the audacity to claim that Da Free John is the greatest spiritual master of all time and that his book, **The Dawn Horse Testament** is the greatest spiritual tome of all time. To be sure, Da has written some brilliant pieces, but to then extend beyond his writings into an ontological appraisal of his status in the universe not only seems completely arbitrary, but downright silly. One gets the impression that we are talking about comic book action heroes. Who is greater: Superman or Batman? Or, as Wilber would have us frame it: Da or Jesus? Well, the debate is entirely missing the point, something which Wilber has yet to come to grips with: brilliant writing does not make one a saint. In fact, a great thinker may live a reprehensible life; and if the published reports of Da Free John are any indication of his personal integrity, then he ranks along with John-Roger, Thakar Singh, Paul Twitchell, and others, as a charlatan more bent on satisfying his personal whims than helping his disciples achieve their spiritual goal.

I say all of this in the context of someone who likes to read Da Free John's books. Da Free John is clearly a more important thinker than most of the cult leaders today, but that does not mean that we have to condone his mean spiritedness and immature taunts under the lame excuse of "Holy Madness." My sense is that if we leave out the adjective "Holy" we will get much closer to the truth behind Da Free John.

NOTES

1. There is a tendency when reading Alan Watts to presume that Enlightenment is an intellectual process; conceptually understand the ultimate truths of the universe and Self Realization naturally occurs. This is not correct, since genuine spiritual awakening involves the entire body-mind- soul complex. To intellectualize about Nirvana or Satori is quite easy, but to actually transform and surrender one's self to the Supreme Reality is a very difficult task indeed. For glimpses into Alan Watts' own trials and errors, see his autobiography, **In My Own Way**.

2. Although it is true that rituals have their place in setting up the right context for religious functions, it should not be forgotten that the essence of such superstructures, as Frits Staal (*Exploring Mysticism*) terms them, is to reveal (not conceal) the sacred mystery. All too often organized religions overlook their vital and primary purpose and begin to serve as social institutions concerned with purely ethical issues. It should also be pointed out here that not every seeker is attracted to a spiritual movement by means of the teachings. As Georg Feuerstein makes clear about the Johannine Daist Communion: "In our experience, people frequently join our Community not because of the Teaching

but because of their response to the Spiritual Master. (They may have seen a photograph of the Adept or a video and subsequently read some of the literature.) The way in which potential devotees are "contacted" by the Adept is mysterious, and no reductionistic explanation can do justice to what has actually happened in hundreds of cases and is continuing to happen to newcomers even now. This is not to deny that for many people the Teaching itself is inherently attractive, but we find that the Teaching literature is read by very many people who have made no attempt to take up this Way, presumably because they do not associate its attractiveness with the spiritual presence of the Adept. And those who are content to merely read the literature, many suffer from the illusion that reading Master Da Free John's works is a sufficient form of spiritual practice. They belong to what the Adept calls the 'talking school'."

3. In the M.S.I.A.'s world-view (i.e., John-Roger's novelistic creations), **The Mystical Traveler of Consciousness** is a force which has always been present on earth.

4. The history of M.S.I.A. is in many ways the life story of its founder, John-Roger Hinkins. John-Roger not only attempted to hide things about his past and cover-up his nefarious sexual activities, but he has also tried to set up phony smear campaigns against his detractors. See **The J.R. Controversy**.

5. The term "naive bumpkin" comes from Da Free John, as quoted by Georg Feuerstein in his **Introduction to Nirvanasara** (Clearlake: The Dawn Horse Press, 1982), page 8.

6. The cause for this change in attitude, I suspect, among disciples of Indian gurus has more to do with the student than with the teacher. For instance, when I was in India in 1981 I noticed that one Swedish seeker judged the greatness of a guru by how much time he gave to him personally. The result? If the master spent lots of time with him, he was a highly evolved teacher. If the master spent little or no time with him, he was still a struggling soul.

7. The bottom line in discipleship is that the student can never fully accept intellectually that his master is perfect. Hence, every absolute verdict or judgement that is made is always doomed to change or be radically altered. In this way, how a devotee sees his guru is to a large degree a reflection of his own inner struggle or advancement. However, there is also a certain element of constancy to a disciple's perspective, especially if they are mature practitioners. As Georg Feuerstein elaborates: "I can readily see that in a certain mood the Guru will appear to a disciple in his transcendental nature, and in another mood the Guru will appear to him very mundane. But beyond these moods of the disciple, there is also a genuine heart intuition of the Guru's true nature which allows the disciple to understand his varying 'readings' of the Adept-Teacher as projections. And that intuition deepens with his spiritual maturation, until the Guru is recognized to be literally identical to himself (or his Self), as the transcendental Being."

8. Since the tragedy of Jonestown there has been a great "cult scare" in America where any non-mainstream religious movement is suspect. In fact, though the word cult by definition is not pejorative it has become the mass media's buzz word for the religiously off-beat. This is unfortunate because there are a number of "cult" leaders who have some very insightful things to say about man, society, and God. Of course, this is not to overlook the glaring truth that many religious leaders are misguided or even dangerous.

9. The preceding quotations were selected from letters and interviews taken in the last ten years on the subject of Da Free John. Georg Feuerstein strongly objects to this type of "journalistic" writing on my part. Comments Feuerstein:

"[This section] is odious to me personally, because it promotes journalistic sensationalism. I merely want to comment on one point: The reason why Master Da Free John wears so many different hats is that all of them represent gifts from devotees, and he is wearing them for their sake, just as all his clothes are made and supplied by devotees. Without the notion of an Adept's perfect self-sacrifice, these gestures remain unintelligible. They are visible signs and the Adept is affirming his relationship with individual devotees constantly."

10. Most of the anti-cult organizations today are religiously based. It is from a theological framework (usually Biblical) that such groups attack wayward religious movements, especially those which do not subscribe to their cherished world-view. Again, I think this is a mistake. Even though we should be critically minded when studying new groups (as well as "old" ones), it is improper to dismiss penetrating ideas and thoughts simply because they do not fit into our own preconceived models of reality.

11. I would like to add that this particular student was exceptionally bright and went on to read parts of The Paradox of Instruction, as well as Ken Wilber's Eye to Eye. To the chagrin of my teacher associate, with whom I was a friend, the student won a major literary scholarship on the basis of a paper he wrote which quoted at length Ken Wilber's thoughts on the "perennial philosophy," portions of which contain elaborations of Da Free John's insights.

12. Quoted from the back cover of Da Free John's The God In Every Body Book (Clearlake: The Dawn Horse Press,

183).

13. There is often a tremendous amount of hype in spirituality. It is not dissimilar in some ways to the reviews of new Hollywood movies. If a recognized "reviewer" raves about a film, there is a predisposition among some moviegoers to question their own tastes. "Well, the New Yorker said it was a classic, so my boredom must be due to my inability to find the deeper meaning." Likewise, if a well known author in philosophy claims that a particular guru or master is "enlightened" the would-be reader is more likely to buy into it. The catch here, though, is that the writer may never have met the teacher in question. Furthermore, the philosopher may have some critical comments to make about the guru, but hesitates in doing so in fear that they will not be printed. Or, if such criticism is made the publisher does not include the same in the blurbs accompanying the book. The problem in all of this is that spirituality (or the guru's status) becomes a marketable item, polished and advertised to "look good," to be "acceptable" for the general reader. What is needed to counteract this "glossing sheen" is for individuals to directly find out what is occurring within the movement.

14. Georg Feuerstein sees my emphasis on distinguishing between the message and the medium as limited. Elaborates Feuerstein: "You make the point about separating the message from the medium. From a worldly (objectivist) and hence limited or partial point of view this is valid. However, from a spiritual perspective this separation of message and medium is a product of the materialistic mind that is unable to perceive the psychophysical unity of the cosmos. Thus, from the Adept's viewpoint, his Teaching is one of his Agencies and as such is co-essential with his spiritual presence and potency. His entire Teaching Argument is intended to bring people to a level of self-understanding that will then enable them to begin to relate to the Adept as Spiritual master. The Adept is the Way. But his esoteric equation is meaningless to the conventional mind that interprets reality on the basis of innate doubt and distrust. I agree with you that writing well is not a sufficient criterion for appraising a Teacher's authenticity. Master Da Free John is manifestly a marvelous writer, but his writings (most of which are in fact printed talks) have a communicative power that goes beyond niceties of style."

15. I owe this discussion of authenticity and legitimacy to the pioneering work of Ken Wilber. See *A Sociable God and Eye to Eye* for more information.

16. Georg Feuerstein and I disagree over the issue of legitimacy as a necessary criterion. My own feeling is that unless the master's actions are above suspicion on this plane, it is not wise to follow him in the spiritual planes. In other words, if you cannot trust the guru in the ordinary waking state, what assurances are there that he should be trusted in the spiritual worlds? Georg Feuerstein believes that the concept of legitimacy, as it is presently used, lacks sophistication, particularly in relation to authenticity. Writes Feuerstein: "Your comment that the 'authenticity of a religious teacher, though partially open to rational appraisements, is determined by the personal engagement of the student' is to the point. Precisely for this reason the sort of treatment attempted by you is of limited import. Its hermeneutical methodology necessarily suffers the limitations of the 'outside' observer. Also, your sharp separation of authenticity from legitimacy is artificial. For instance, Jesus' well-known outburst of righteous anger at the money lenders in the temple cannot be legitimized other than by his authenticity as a Spiritual Master. If we assume he was less than an Enlightened Adept, then this act was egoic and not self-transcending, and the spiritual Principle cannot be thought to have been upheld by him in that case. Then the question of the legitimacy of his behavior can be appropriately discussed within the context of Hebrew mores. If, however, we see Jesus as an Adept, then his action immediately takes on a different significance. He may have acted out of keeping with standard behavior at a holy site, but a larger, spiritual Principle was involved that led to the immediate purification of the situation (that is, positive change in spiritual terms). Of course, the latter view only makes sense within a perspective that is nonmaterialistic. And, to be sure, such a non-materialistic orientation is essentially nonconventional."

17. It is extremely dangerous to make final judgements on any human attainment. Rather, we should always realize that our appraisements, though at times useful and necessary, are subject to revision. Moreover, since we do not have access to all levels of existence, it would be premature to make absolute claims on the nature of reality. As S.L. Frank beautifully points out in his landmark text, *The Unknowable*, the paradox of life is that the moment we know something with certainty, at that very same instant we do not know it. Every appraisal, even the one that is presented here, is but a partial glimpse.

18. Da Free John's work is exceptional. Though we may disagree with his guru image or even his lifestyle, it would be a mistake not to acknowledge the power of his writings. Ken Wilber was not exaggerating in his praise when he wrote that Da Free John's *The Paradox of Instruction* "is, in its scope, its eloquence, its simplicity, and its ecstatic fund of transcendent insight, probably unparalleled in the entire field of spiritual literature." This book and others have rightly claimed an enthusiastic audience. The debatable point arises when we begin to equate superb writing/teaching with the author himself, particularly when there has been no personal contact or engagement with the guru.

19. These observations were taken from interviews and letters during the past ten years on the subject of Da Free John. Georg Feuerstein, again, disagrees with some of these comments, since he feels that they arise from a

fundamental misunderstanding of the Adept and his work. Elucidates Feuerstein:

"The question of legitimacy can obviously be used as a convenient instrument for the conventional mind to air its biases and presumptions. A good case in point is the whole matter of charging money for spiritual services. Money, like sex, has traditionally been regarded as being antithetical to true spiritual life. This naive view can be understood historically and psychologically. It is essentially neurotic, as is all purism. Besides, it is worth pointing out that the early Christian cult was entirely financed by its converts who had to give up all their worldly possessions! Jesus didn't request a donation, true. He demanded that his devotees or disciples abandon the world altogether and become renunciates. Naturally, they would not leave their possessions to the state, but make them over to the growing community of followers. Master Da Free John also requests no donation. Like Jesus or Gautama before him, he expects his devotees to live as renunciates in community with one another."

Personally, I have a different view than Georg Feuerstein on this subject of money. Perhaps it is my own prejudice but I remember when I was seventeen years old and went to one of Da Free John's (then Franklin Jones) public talks, where a group leader spoke on the teachings of his guru. The meeting was held in West Hollywood on Melrose Avenue during the beginning years of the movement (1973). Finally, after the presentation, an older woman raised her hand and asked how it would be possible to sit in formal meditation with Franklin Jones (Da Free John). The speaker answered by saying, among other things, that a donation of fifty dollars or more was necessary. Needless to say, this request for money was disconcerting to the audience that was present. My own views on this subject are outlined in Chapter Eleven, "The Spiritual Crucible."

20. This notion of self-proclamation or gurus making claims about their own spiritual attainment is a complex issue. My own sentiments are in agreement with Julian P. Johnson's classic adage, "If any man claims to have attained the highest in spiritual development that claim of itself may be taken as conclusive proof that he has not attained so much." Georg Feuerstein has a different view. Argues Feuerstein:

"2500 years have elapsed since Gautama the Buddha's parinirvana. 2000 years have passed since Jesus' crucifixion. Most of us now look upon both as truly great spiritual lights. Many regard both as fully Enlightened beings. And yet, both made personal claims about their own spiritual Realization. The New Testament is full of them, as is the Pali Canon. And let us not evade the issue by arguing that both documents do not represent the ipsissima verba of these two great Adepts. They may not give us the exact words of Gautama and Jesus but they certainly give us the gist of their Teaching and Work. Why should an Awakened being not proclaim his Realization if what is supposed to be his function is to make a visible impact on the world? Not every Enlightened being is destined to die in obscurity in a cave or a jungle. I dare say few are so destined."

21. The island is called Naitauba and is the location of the Hermitage Sanctuary of the Johannine Daist Communion.

22. Since Da Free John changes appearance so often (or at least in the pictures accompanying his books), it is understandable why "conventionally minded" readers are put off by him. To them, Da Free John looks like a caricature of the cult leader gone eccentric.

23. See Da Free John's Scientific Proof of the Existence of God Will Soon Be Announced by the White House! (Clearlake: Dawn Horse Press, 1980) for more on this perspective.

24. This is the inherent limitation of empiricism, rationalism, and even critical thinking. Regardless of how well we may analyze a situation when it come to spirituality or trans-personal realms of consciousness the investigator must engage in actual transcendent practices in order to rightly and fully understand the height of a teacher or master. This, of course, is not to say that rational scrutiny does not have its place (the existence of this book is an argument for critical thinking), but only that we eventually move away from armchair speculations into experimental engagement. Georg Feuerstein is correct, I believe, when he states that my treatment of new religious groups has "limited import," since it suffers "the limitations of the 'outside' observer." However, even in its "limited" ability, such reports do serve a vital function in developing keen discrimination. Thus, the intellect should act as a stepping stone for further evolutionary growth, not as a barrier or hindrance.

25. I think it would be unfair to categorically dismiss Da Free John and his writings, or, to lump him with the majority of other self-styled gurus in America. At the very least, though we may be critical of Da Free John's actions, etc., his writings do open us up to the utter Mystery and Wonder of creation. The directness of his argument is both refreshing and awakening.

26. It is curious, though, that Da Free John makes little or no mention of his parents/family.

27. Da (Bubba) Free John, *The Enlightenment of the Whole Body* (Clearlake: Dawn Horse Press, 1978), page 6.
28. Ibid., page 12.
29. Ibid., page 13
30. Ibid., page 13.
31. Ibid., page 13.
32. My biographical account here of Da Free John's life follows the information given in *The Enlightenment of the Whole Body* and *The Knee of Listening*.
33. For more on Ramana Maharshi's realizations see **Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi**, Volume I and III (Tiruvannamalai: Sri Ramanasramam, 1972).
34. Da Free (Bubba) John, op. cit., page 19.
35. Ibid., page 20.
36. See Da Free John, *The Paradox of Instruction* (Clearlake: Dawn Horse Press, 1977) and *The Way That I Teach* (Clearlake: Dawn Horse Press, 1978).
37. Da (Bubba) Free John, op. cit., page 28.
38. Ibid., page 38. This excerpt is extremely important in revealing the impetus of Da Free John's ministry. If, as he says, psychic forms of other unenlightened beings began to spontaneously appear to him during meditation, it lends credence to why Da Free John felt moved to act as a spiritual master. Moreover, the passage is a pivotal revelation about how gurus are drawn to certain disciples. Apparently, there is a trans-structural destiny awaiting individuals who transcend their own body/mind limitations. Instead of just merging totally with the Supreme Reality, enlightened beings are propelled to "work out" the obstacles of other individuals who are karmically tied to them. Hence, contrary to our usual notions of spiritual teachers (and more in line with the esoteric interpretation of religious mysticism), a master is Divinely commissioned to function as an agency for liberating souls. This "commission," as it were, though, can only occur after one has completely freed the self from karmic/structural bonds.
39. Da (Bubba) Free John, *The Enlightenment of the Whole Body* (op. cit), pages 38-39.
40. Ibid., page 46.
41. The terms "Divine Ignorance" and "Radical Understanding" are used interchangeably and represent the Mystery behind all human endeavors for absolute knowledge.
42. With the publication of these texts, Da Free John's message became much more widely known (and, hence through extension, respected by scholars).
43. Roy Finch's article, **The Most 'Phenomenal' Teacher**, in Georg Feuerstein's (editor) *Humor Suddenly Returns* (Clearlake: The Dawn Horse Press, 1984), pages 63-74, contains some thoughts on the wisdom and necessity of Da Free John's move to the island of Naitauba.
44. See **M-Fields: An Interview with Rupert Sheldrake**, *The Laughing Man Magazine* (Volume 5, Number 3), for the possible ramifications of "collective enlightenment."
45. Bubba (Da) Free John, *The Paradox of Instruction* (Clearlake: the Dawn Horse Press, 1977), quoted from the back cover.
46. Da Free John eloquently points out that ego is not an entity but an activity. Hence, in reality it has no real or a priori substance. Rather, it represents the retraction (moment to moment) of man from his true and eternal condition (Oneness with God). See Bubba (Da) Free John's **The Paradox of Instruction** (op. cit.) for a more detailed explanation behind the ego principle and its relationship to the Heart.
47. I have based my discussion here largely upon Da Free John's book, *The Four Fundamental Questions* (Clearlake: The Dawn Horse Press), which I strongly recommend as a good introduction to "Divine Ignorance" or "Radical Understanding."

48. Ken Wilber's books, **The Atman Project** and **Up From Eden** in particular, are excellent extensions of Da Free John's fundamental argument.

49. Da (Bubba) Free John, *The Enlightenment of the Whole Body* (op. cit.).

50. Da (Bubba) Free John's *The Way That I Teach* (Clearlake: The Dawn Horse Press, 1978) for an elaboration on these "Seven Stages of Eternal Life."

51. Da Free John, **Nirvanasara** (Clearlake: The Dawn Horse Press, 1982). Clarifies Georg Feuerstein: "Master Da Free John sees as his real Work the Teaching of the Yoga of Enlightenment, which has to do with the persistence of the Disposition of unqualified Love under all circumstances. In other words, Enlightenment itself is not the end state. It is a process, and a school."

52. Da (Bubba) Free John, **The Paradox of Instruction** (Clearlake: The Dawn Horse Press, 1977), page 30.

53. The most exhaustive treatment of the "philosophy of Ignorance" is S.K. Frank's masterpiece, **The Unknowable**. It is considered by some scholars to be the most important work of 20th century Russian philosophy. Comments Georg Feuerstein: "It is important to realize that Master Da Free John's argument about Ignorance is not a philosophical proposition like Kant's or Cusa's. Its whole point is to throw the individual into just that Condition of Ignorance, to allow him to intuit It. So long as the Adept is understood as a mere philosopher and his Teaching as philosophy only, neither are really understood."

54. Fred Alan Wolf, Ph.D., Foreword, to Da Free John's **The Transmission of Doubt** (Clearlake: The Dawn Horse Press, 1984) page 11.

55. Simply put, the major criticism of Da Free John is the "appearance" that he is on an ego trip and that his writings reflect an exclusive revelation. For instance, there are a number of books written by other masters which do not give the impression of ego, e.g., *Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Paramahansa Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*; and Baba Faqir Chand's *The Unknowing Sage*. This "impression of humility" is not due to the reader but to the style with which the masters chose to express their life and teachings.

56. Although Da Free John writes so much about the oneness of God and that Enlightenment is our true condition/heritage, his language is distinctively dualistic, replete with "I" versus "you" statements. For some readers, this stylistic preference automatically removes them from Da Free John, as his tone is often paternalistic, and, in some cases, condescending. A good example of the latter is in the question/answer transcriptions between Da Free John and his disciples.

DEVOTEE: Bubba, you are communicating a consideration here to people who have not totally assumed it. But in the future we will be able to assume it.

BUBBA: It would seem that way, wouldn't it? But since I can never leave, it stands to reason that you can never change. Certainly you will all become better, but that betterness will be the ordinariness of that new time.

--Bubba (Da) Free John, *The Way That I Teach* (Clearlake: The Dawn Horse Press, 1978), page 243--

57. **Pondering and Preparation**, An Essay by Da Free John, August 25, 1984, *The Laughing Man Magazine* (Volume 5, Number 3), page 81. My personal problem with this particular essay, besides the overuse of "Me" and "I," is that the overall thrust of Da Free John's invitation involves some type of monetary subscription. For example, to be a "Friend" of the Johannine Daist Communion one should contribute \$70 or more and subscribe to **The Laughing Man Magazine**. This continued emphasis on money as a prerequisite for "formal association," beginning in the early 1970's when a donation was expected for sitting in meditation with Franklin Jones (Da Free John), undermines the legitimacy of Da Free John's presentations.

58. James Steinberg, **Avadhoots, Mad Lamas, and Fools: the Crazy Wisdom Tradition**, *The Laughing Man Magazine* (Volume 3, Number 1), page 68.

59. *Ibid.*, page 101.

60. Richard Grossinger, **Far-West Journal** (November 1984), page 78.

61. Concludes Georg Feuerstein: "One final point: Although the Crazy Wisdom Adept constantly deals with the conventional mind of those who aspire to spiritual practice in his company, he NEVER pushes anyone beyond the point where he or she ceases to relate to the test with real understanding or self-insight, true surrender to God, actual

reception of the Spirit-Current, etc. Besides, the disciple is always free to NOT participate, even in a verbal confrontation. The mark of the true Adept is that he will set his disciples free, not bind them. But it is a mistaken popular notion that spiritual life is all sweetness and delight. It is a profoundly difficult struggle, an ordeal of constant self-transcendence. The other mark of any Adept worth his salt is that he will always provoke a spiritual crisis in his disciples or devotees. That hasn't changed in a thousand years!"

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Chapter Ten

THE HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE OF RELIGIOUS VISIONS

"I do not know whether my realizations are right or wrong. I do not make any claim that my realization is final. People say that my Form manifests to them and helps them in solving their worldly as well as mental problems, but I do not go anywhere, nor do I know anything about such miraculous instances. My Guru had directed me, "Faqr, change the mode of preaching before abandoning this mortal frame." Now, after such experiences, I question myself, "Faqr Chand, what mode of preaching do you wish to change? Which teachings should I alter?" The change that I can make in the present mode of preaching is "O Man, your real helper is your own Self and your own Faith, but you are badly mistaken and believe that somebody from without comes to help you. No Hazrat Mohammed, no Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, or any other God, Goddess, or Guru comes from without. This entire game is that of your impressions and suggestions which are ingrained upon your mind through your eyes and ears and of your Faith and Belief." This is the change that I am ordained to bring about. . . ."

--Baba Faqr Chand, 1976

In the summer of 1978 I visited Faqr Chand at his ashram, Manavta Mandir, in North India. At that time I had several personal interviews with the sage. It became exceedingly apparent to myself and Professor Mark Juergensmeyer (who visited with the sage in late August of 1978) that Faqr was something of an anomaly amongst Indian gurus. For, although the then ninety-two year-old saint had a rather large and devoted following, estimated to be in the tens of thousands, he absolutely disclaimed himself of any miracles attributed to his spiritual work, saying quite frankly that they were products of either the devotee's karma or intense faith. Indeed, it was this very insight which allegedly led Faqr to his own enlightenment.

When Faqr Chand began to initiate disciples into surat shabd yoga (lit., "the union of the attention with the inner spiritual sound") at the request of his master (Maharishi Shiv Brat Lal, who was famous for his numerous spiritual writings in Urdu), a most curious thing happened. His devotees began reporting that Faqr's radiant form appeared inside their meditations. Others related miracles that were caused by Faqr's prasad (blessed food), letters, or advice. However, all during this time Faqr claims that he had absolutely no knowledge or awareness of his form appearing to distant provinces or performing miracles to the sick and dying. As Faqr himself wrote, "People say that my Form manifests to them and helps them in solving their worldly as well as mental problems, but I do not go anywhere, nor do I know anything about such miraculous instances."

It was at this point when Faqr asked himself, "What about the visions that appear to me? Are they a creation of my own mind, and does my guru also not know about his appearances to me?" Only then, according to Faqr, did he realize the truth: **All manifestations, visions, and forms that are seen within are mental creations.**

After his realization, Faqr began preaching his belief that all saints, from Buddha, Christ, Kabir, to even his own master Shiv Brat Lal are ignorant about the miracles or inner experiences attributed to them. In a paper given to the American Academy of Religion in March 1981, I used the term, **The Unknowing Hierophany**, to describe what Faqr Chand believes, that is, a "Divine" vehicle within the temporal world that is unaware of its spiritual manifestations.

Though Faqr is probably the most outspoken, other great religious leaders, saints and mystics have expounded on this same unknowingness. However, it is not seen by most (especially by devotees) as an explanation of their subservience to the Great Mystery, but rather as a statement designed to exhibit a saint's humility, or, as a tacit attempt for concealing his real mission and purpose.

Jesus, for instance, is reported in the Gospel of Mark as asking the crowd that was following him, "Who touched me?" After this, a woman who had suffered from a "flow of blood" for twelve years came up to Jesus and told him about her plan for a Divine cure. By a brief touch a miracle happened, and she was cured from hemorrhaging. At this Jesus said, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. . . ."

The famed sage, **Ramana Maharshi**, when asked about Jesus' power to perform miracles, substantiates what Faqr Chand had taught for over forty years:

"Was Jesus conscious of his powers. . . . Such manifestation is as real as your own reality. In other words, when you identify yourself with the body as in jagrat, you see gross objects; when in subtle body or in mental plane as in svapna, you see objects equally subtle; in the absence of identification as in sushupti, you see nothing. The objects seen bear relation to the state of the seer. The same applies to visions of God."

Another expression of this unknowingness is given in a speech by **Charan Singh**, the deceased Satguru at Beas who commanded perhaps the largest following of any master in India. In 1951, when Charan Singh was appointed the successor to Jagat Singh, he told the vast gathering of devotees,

"I feel that I am like a stone idol in a temple. According to their notions of love, some bathe it with cold water, some with hot water, and some deck it in fine clothes; but it is still an idol all the same."

Along with this "unknowingness" there is also the internal, ever-present supreme knowledge which saints and sages have described as the hallmark of enlightenment. Jesus said, "The Father and I are one." The Sufi martyr, Mansur al-Hallaj, shouted before his execution, "ana'l-Haqq" (I am the Truth). Sarmad, the Jewish-Indian saint, exclaimed, "I am King of Kings." And Meister Eckhart, in slightly different language, wrote, "The eye with which God sees me is the same eye which I perceive Him."

However, this kind of knowledge cannot be equated with logical, objective learning. The former is the realization of one's real and eternal nature, a transcendental experience of oneness. The latter is concerned with dualistic thinking, knowing about things; hence, it is based upon an illusory division of the world into two separate components: the subject and the object. Hence, when saints talk about the ultimate knowledge, they are referring to the Ground of Being, that which is the condition of all subsequent conditions. Consequently, an enlightened master may not know anything about academic subjects such as quantum mechanics, anthropology, or critical history.

The Manifestation of a Tibetan Monk

A crucial question arises at this junction, however, with regard to spiritual manifestations. If Christ, Kabir, and Faqir Chand were not aware of how their miraculous powers manifested, does it then hold that all such visions, etc., are individual creations, determined by the faith and concentration of zealous devotees? At first glance, the answer would appear to be "yes," because many internal visions are not of factual and historical human entities, but of amalgamated characters, mythic beings, and fictional heroines -- some whose life stories may be entirely based upon the writer's own creative mind.

One such instance concerns a Tibetan monk who is allegedly over five-hundred years old and resides in a remote hut in the Himalayas. The author has had personal correspondence over several years with members of an esoteric contemporary religious organization who profess to have extraordinary visions of this Tibetan monk, describing in detail his appearance and peculiar dress. However, documentary research has shown that the founder of this organization appears to have created the Tibetan, basing the monk's life story on the biographies of Kirpal Singh, Sawan Singh, Shiv Dayal Singh, Kabir, and several other real-life gurus.

What all this presents is a devastating problem in the study of religious visions. If there is no functional necessity to distinguish between a vision of a genuine historical personage and a fictional guru, does it really matter then if one has a vision of Christ, a blue Krishna, a living saint, or the local minister? Indeed, are all religious visions qualitatively the same?

Wilber's Transpersonal Structuralism: The Adjudication Of Religious Visions

According to Ken Wilber there is a qualitative difference between religious visions, precisely because not all spiritual manifestations occur on the same structural level. For instance, if one sees an image of Jesus in a dream while asleep, it would probably be qualitatively different from one seen with eyes open while awake. The difference here is not so much one of content as it is of context.

Since there are various levels of consciousness (creating several contextual layers), the first step in any critical examination of religious visions, Wilber contends, is to perform a hierarchical structural analysis so as to determine on which level a particular manifestation is taking place. Wilber, drawing from his study of the Perennial Philosophy (the term was first coined by Leibniz), postulates a dynamic spiritual cartography in which the various stages of consciousness are mapped out. Such a schema, he argues, allows for a much needed adjudication for the variety of religious expressions by assigning them a place in the hierarchy. Elaborates Wilber:

"The hierarchical nature of this spectrum will give us a critical-normative sociology of religion, one that is

capable of structurally analyzing various religious expressions, assigning them a spot in the hierarchy, consequently adjudicating their degree of authenticity, and accordingly pronouncing that, in terms of an overall critical sociological theory, this or that religious engagement is higher than this or that other religious engagement, precisely as we now say, for example, a stage-6 moral response is higher than a stage-4 response. . . ."

Wilber's developmental hierarchy begins at the lowest stage of man's evolution (what he terms the "archaic" -- stage 1) and culminates at the zenith of human attainments (the asymptotic limit of Brahman or Godhead--stage 10). These stages may also be classified under three main categories: subconscious/pre-personal; self-conscious/personal; and super-conscious/trans-personal.

Following Wilber's schema, religious visions -- by definition and implication -- are non-rational occurrences taking place on either the subconscious/pre-personal level or the superconscious/trans-personal level. It is important to note here, however, that just because all visions, as such, are non-rational, does not mean that they are necessarily trans-rational. A distinction must be made between subconscious and superconscious manifestations. If this is not done, a "pre/trans fallacy" occurs, resulting in the confusion of infantile images with genuine spiritual apparitions.

Many so-called religious visions, for instance, may be nothing more than vivid images which manifest quite normally while one is dreaming. Simply because an image is of a holy or revered personage does not qualify it automatically as a trans-personal manifestation. As the late Faqir Chand asserted, a saint, or a guru, does not consciously project his form; rather, it is the intense faith and concentration of the devotee who creates the image within. Therefore, the proper adjudication of spiritual visions lies not in the manifest content of the "apparition,"p; but in the context and structure wherein one beholds the sacred image.

The important question concerning the authenticity of religious visions, as Wilber clearly points out, is not one of content (structurally speaking, it matters little if one beholds the Virgin Mary, Buddha, or Krishna), but of context. That is, on which level of consciousness is the vision seen? Is it a subconscious dream image? A psychic intuition? Or, a genuine encounter with a subtle plane deity? It is only after such a contextual-structure determination that the critical phenomenologist can then proceed to analyze the content of the vision properly, assessing its degree of legitimacy. That is, how well does the particular image integrate the perceiver, within that hierarchical level?

The aspects of authenticity and legitimacy are necessary in determining: 1) the level of consciousness wherein the vision is occurring; and 2) the degree of validity that the particular image has for integrating one to that structural level of adaptation. Ken Wilber, in *A Sociable God*, explains these two important concepts in further detail:

"Degree of authenticity" refers to the relative degree of actual transformation delivered by a given religion (or world view). This is a vertical scale: "more authentic" means more capable of reaching a higher level (and not merely integrating the present level). "Degree of legitimacy" refers to the relative degree of integration, meaning-value, good mana, ease of functioning, avoidance of taboo, and so forth within any given level. This is a horizontal scale; "more legitimate" means more integrative-meaningful within that level.

Hence, following these important distinctions made by Wilber, there can be a hierarchical structural adjudication of visions, determining the authenticity of the religious encounter (employing Wilber's developmental cartography, is it happening on stage 3,4,7, or 8?). And secondly, there can be a horizontal-translative appraisalment, measuring the degree of legitimacy that the particular apparition has.

For instance, if one beholds an image of the previously described Tibetan in a dream, it is, according to Wilber, an inauthentic vision because it occurs on a subconscious/prepersonal level (stages, 3, 4, or 5). Authentic religious experiences, he argues, begin only after the rational - egoic structure (i.e., the psychic--stage 7). However, such an apparition may have a significant degree of legitimacy if it helps integrate an important myth or world view advocated by a movement.

With regard to visions of fictional heroes, saints, and masters, it is conceivable that an earnest devotee may have an authentic experience of a fabricated mystic in the psychic-subtle planes. However, the authenticity of this encounter has nothing to do with the image-content as such. Rather, it is the structure itself which gives numinous power to the experience. Whether or not a guru or a master is a literary invention or a historical personage matters very little in terms of authenticity; it does have an important role, though, in determining the degree of legitimacy of the encounter.

Therefore, Faqir Chand's implication, that all visions are illusions, needs qualifications. First, Faqir Chand was making his statement presumably from a ninth and tenth plane perspective (the causal-transcendental stages); and, from such a state all of the lower regions may be illusory in that they are subsumed by the Infinite or Brahman.

Secondly, Faqir Chand, because he may be speaking from a transcendental point of view, could give the erroneous impression that a dream experience and a subtle plane encounter are one and the same. Actually, Faqir Chand stated in a July, 1978 interview that he was aware of the distinction between **dream visions** and subtle-plane manifestations; however, he considered both to be illusions and unnecessary in light of God-Realization, which is by implication groundless and visionless. And finally, though Faqir Chand asserts that the guru is not conscious of his spiritual manifestations, this does not mean that there is not qualitative difference between such apparitions. Rather, as we have noted, there could be a developmental hierarchy involved in religious visions.

With such qualifications aside, it is, nevertheless, important to realize (along with Faqir Chand) that authentic visions (be they psychic, subtle or causal) eventually give way to the Transcendental Reality of the Absolute which is the source from where all life manifests -- Itself being visionless, groundless, without form or structure, void of center, infinite in all dimensions. . . .

By understanding the hierarchical nature behind spiritual manifestations, we begin to see how our study of religious visions might be structured. First, the dimension of unknowingness, as related by Faqir Chand and illustrated elsewhere, is an essential a priori foundation. In the study of religious visions, this represents a "bracketing out" of causal questions, an acceptance as valid, though not reducible, though not explainable, of the phenomena "as is." This serves as a vital informational stand, much like the phenomenological approach in near-death studies taken by Raymond Moody, Kenneth Ring, and Michael Sabom. However, as Frits Staal (*Exploring Mysticism*) and Ken Wilber (*A Sociable God*) point out, this very position -- that of phenomenological hermeneutics -- can become anti-informational if allowed to stagnate. Comments Wilber:

"But taken in and by itself, hermeneutics seems finally to suffer a series of unhappy limitations. Foremost among these is its radicalization of situational truth and its consequent lack of a universal or even quasi-universal critical dimension, a way to judge the actual validity, not just interpretive mesh, of a religious truth claim. Krishna may have been transcending, but was the Hopi really producing rain? How are we to differentiate the authentic from the less authentic engagements?"

Therefore, the study of visions, though it has to begin from a non-reductionistic posture, can move away from a purely phenomenological investigation into a critical developmental structuralism, so that the authenticity and legitimacy of the encounter can be fully explored and assessed. Hence, the examination of religious manifestations -- and perhaps most religious claims -- becomes both a psychologically and sociologically useful discipline in evaluating the nature of human existence.

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Chapter Six

THE HIMALAYAN CONNECTION

U.F.O.'s and the Chandian Effect

A major problem facing the study of unidentified flying object sighting reports is the lack of an accurate and comprehensive classification system. What are subsumed under the term "U.F.O.'s" are not merely extraterrestrial space crafts but a whole array of psychological, sociological, and even religious phenomena. In order to alleviate the "category errors" inherent in such a diverse field, I have employed the discoveries of **Baba Faqir Chand** (on the nature of religious visions) and the work of **Ken Wilber** (in transpersonal psychology) to propose a paradigm from which U.F.O. reports will be studied under three distinct divisions: translative (read: empirical); transformative (read mental); and transfusive (read: the fusion of empirical and mental modes of knowledge).

With such a tripartite classification system we can begin to view reports of unidentified flying objects in a more understandable light. First, we can distinguish natural occurrences from transmudane apparitions, without damaging the intrinsic quality of the experience itself. Second, though we may continue to search for authentic translative encounters from life forms outside of our own solar system, our main emphasis (in light of transformation) will be to develop a state-of-consciousness-specific understanding of U.F.O.'s. And thirdly, with transfusive experiences -- where transformation and translation intersect -- our investigation will no longer be hampered by the apparent "confusion" of such incidents, but will be able to examine the close link between experiential modes of knowing and empirical-sensory data.

Delhi (July 1978)

In July of 1978 I was doing genealogical research at Sawan Ashram in Old Delhi, India. Although I was aptly forewarned that the heat in the summer was excruciating, the ninety percent humidity and one hundred degree plus temperatures overwhelmed me. My only relief from the weather came in the evenings. But even then it was slight.

On the second to last day of my stay, Jean Lyotard, a noted architect from Northern California, and I decided to spend some time on the roof of the monastery. He was leaving in a few days to go back to America. I was to go northward for further research on the Radhasoami tradition. The Indic sky sparkled with stars that night and our conversation eventually turned to astronomy -- the natural extension of which led to the subject of exobiology and UFOs. Jean commented, "I believe UFO's exist and that we have been visited by higher intelligences from other galaxies." Knowing first hand of Jean's intelligence and perceptive observations, I probed further, "Why do you say that?" -- "Because I have seen them myself many times!" His answer was nonchalant. "What were they? Strange lights in the sky, like a luminous ball or a shooting star?" -- "Yes, but more than that. . . I have been contacted by extraterrestrials personally." I gulped, realizing that my dinner of dal and chappatis had not yet been fully digested. "What! come with that again."

"It was in Southern France ten years ago. I was in the countryside when I beheld them. The most beautiful being I have ever seen radiated before me and pointed to the sky. He told me to concentrate on the brilliance above. As I became attentive I was pulled up toward the light. However, the experience was so intense I hesitated and turned away. I have seen them on many occasions. The being was the most exquisite creature. His face, his eyes were. . . well. . . beyond description."

I could not help thinking of several fanciful stories I had read before. Jean's account sounded too much like a headline in National Enquirer. But I listened with attention and respect. I appreciated his rationality too much to dismiss his encounter simply as "swamp gas." Jean perceived the alien as a person of advanced spiritual capabilities, distinguishing his visitor from a technological construct. His description had a mystic ring to it, slightly detached from the cold, hardware experiences I had read about happening to Mississippi fishermen and Louisiana housewives. And then, in the midst of our conversation, a remarkable thing occurred. While both of us were taking a momentary glance at the sky, a fine point of light, like a star, caught our attention. Jean immediately recognized it to be a UFO, and predicted what would happen next; "Watch! The light will speed across the sky and will reappear on the opposite side." To my bewilderment, it did exactly that. In its next appearance, which took Jean and I a bit of tracking, he mentioned that it would most likely be joined by another of its kind. And so it was. By this time I was totally absorbed. Four star-like lights streaked across the sky. Maneuvering in an unusual manner, they circled several times in the deep blue vault, disappeared, and came into view distinctly again. Then Jean indicated that the lights would go across the sky once more and reappear

As the objects manifested, disappeared, and lighted up again in the Asian blackness, I experienced the vividness of a UFO sighting. But the question that remained was one of explanation: satellites? beam reflections? too much curry?

The Himalayan Connection

Little did I realize that night in Old Delhi that a vital clue to the significance and meaning of UFOs would come a month later when I was doing field work in the foothills of the Himalayas.

Because of my research on the gurus in the Radhasoami tradition, I visited Faqir Chand, a 92 year old sage who had been engaged in intensive spiritual practices since 1905. He was regarded within the Shabd Yoga community to be one of the most advanced yogic masters in India. It was in Basra Bagdad (Iraq) during World War One when Faqir realized the pivotal secret in understanding transmundane phenomena. The implications for comprehending UFO sightings are staggering. In his autobiography, **The Unknowing Sage**, Faqir relates how in the middle of a battle at Hamidia the form of his guru Shiv Brat Lal manifested to him and said, "Faqir, worry not, the enemy has not come to attack but to take away their dead. Let them do that. Don't waste your ammunition." Faqir then sent for the Subedar Major and narrated the appearance and direction of his guru. He followed the same strategy and all were saved. When Faqir reached Bagdad after the fighting, however, many of Shiv Brat Lal disciples began to worship him instead. Faqir recollected:

"It was all unexpected and strange for me. I enquired of them, "Our Guru Maharaj is at Lahore. I am not your Guru. Why do you worship me?" They replied, "On the battle field, we were in danger. Death lurked in hand. You appeared before us and gave us correct directions. We were spared." I was wonder struck by this explanation. I had no knowledge of it at all. I, myself, being in trouble at that time, had not even remembered them. A mystery shrouded the whole thing, "who appeared inside them?"

When Faqir discovered that his own guru (Shiv Brat Lal) was unaware of his manifestations, he concluded that the answer to the perplexing problem of religious visions must rest in the nature of consciousness itself. Faqir elaborated:

"People say that my Form manifests to them and helps them in solving their worldly as well as mental problems, but I do not go anywhere, nor do I know anything about such miraculous instances. O' Man, your real helper, is your own Self and your own Faith, but you are badly mistaken and believe that somebody from without comes to help you. No Hazrat Mohammed, no Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, or any other Goddess or God comes from without. This entire game is that of your impressions and suggestions which are ingrained upon your mind through your eyes and ears and of your Faith and Belief."

Thus, following Faqir's lucid argument, the *modus operandi* for religious visions is not due to outside or disconnected forces (although exterior stimuli can act as a catalyst for it), but to the internal process of concentration. A force that for approximately sixteen hours a day enables one to see the everyday, common sense, lawful world, and for another several hours at night can allow one to fly to the moon, converse with unknown people, and create incredible panoramas. Consequently, the appearance and duration of such visions is intimately related to consciousness and locality. Dreaming serves as the classic and perhaps most misunderstood example.

The Chandian Effect: The Experience of Certainty

What bearing do the discoveries of the sage of Hoshiarpur have on Jean's experience and those of others like him? Simply this: the nature of one's attention is related directly to the perception one experiences. If our perspective alters so does what we perceive. As ancient Upanishadic speculation and current studies in consciousness have shown, we do not see the world as it "is." Rather, owing to our neurological structures, we see the universe -- incoming stimuli -- relatively; appearances flowing in and out depending on our own biologically defined anatomies. This "predicament" has meaning, content, and purpose within the framework of our own lived-through experiences. However, it is naive to say that our interpretation of life from science, philosophy, or religion absolutely explains the world as it really is. Instead, what we have are metaphorical models of explanation, which work respectively within the brackets of our own purviewed existence. The unseen thread, the larger gestalt, however, will go by undetected. With sharply contoured (mathematical, if you choose) operating mechanisms, we find ourselves living in a universe understood not by pure perception but by alternating analogs.

What these metaphors are (or, more precisely, which level of reality we behold) depends on what I call the Chandian Effect -- the experience of certainty, named after the late Faqir Chand who was the first person in the Sant Mat tradition to bring this issue to light. It is from this bedrock quality that we distinguish, acknowledge, and discriminate so-called reality from appearance or illusion. What we call the actual world is dependent solely upon the vibration and consistency in the persuasiveness of certainty. Although we can see, hear, smell, and touch our reality, what determines our conviction that this world is real is not based empirically but is rather an immeasurable quality --

an undefinable feeling. This is strange indeed, for quality is an experience that science cannot study (save as an epiphenomenalism) but without which there would not be any scientific or intellectual endeavors! Science, which is itself rooted primarily upon the concept of materialism (a unified theory of what is real and substantial) excels or disintegrates upon the degree ascertainable of this primordial quality. Hence, quantity -- that which is measurable and which science holds as true and permanent -- proceeds a priori from quality and not vice versa. Huston Smith has elaborated more on this important distinction.

"The experience of certainty is a propelling force behind how we make up our days, fashion our plans, articulate our hopes. If there occurs a break in the Chandian Effect, our normal waking state would collapse into a passing phantasm. Like our nocturnal dreams, it would be stored away and temporarily forgotten. The experience of certainty is so overwhelming that when it radiates forth the question of illusion seldom arises. Just as the chair is quite solid when we strike it with our hand, so too does the world appear concrete and vivid when the Chandian Effect pervades."

Our state of reality is determined by the movement of consciousness into various expressions of the Chandian Effect. Each level of awareness is controlled and empowered by its inherent degree of certainty, which is determined by the intensity and duration of its minimum threshold. Thus, for example, we are predisposed to call the waking state "real" because it is longer (and hence, by extension, more vivid) than the dreaming stage. We say this only when we are awake, however, never while we are dreaming. The reason behind this is simple. At each level where attention is established, a certainty boundary is in effect, which, owing to the given center of awareness, varies in strength, time, and permanence. Hence, even the waking state, although extremely real, only lasts about eighteen hours normally until the Chandian Effect structured upon this level runs down below the minimum threshold and our consciousness shifts to another region. So it is with the dream stage. At the moment of sleep (itself nothing but the transition of attention) we find ourselves occupied in a world that just hours before we thought was nothing but an incredible illusion -- because it was dimmed by the intensity of the certainty force inherent in the waking state -- but with which we now deal quite seriously: running away in terror from death or luring attractive mates for orgasmic satisfaction. From this native pattern of awareness we can see that our lives are simply natural progressions of consciousness from various boundaries within the Chandian Effect. Wilber has detailed this progression, both ontogenetically and phylogenetically, in his transpersonal view of evolution.

The Development of Consciousness

Wilber illustrates in his book **The Atman Project** (1980) that consciousness develops essentially along two major avenues: translation and transformation. When attention gravitates within a given state (e.g. the waking state), neither altering it nor transcending it, translation ensues. Awareness is thus established within a particular field of the Chandian Effect, being held in constriction by the inherent certainty boundary. This does not mean, however, that change is not taking place -- it indeed is -- but only that the change is within given parameters. In other words, although there is a constant flux in our waking world, the changes themselves do not radically convert the state itself. Smith describes this same movement of attention as horizontal, development that proceeds along (i.e. within) the given plane of action.

On the other side, the shift of consciousness from one state to another (Wilber points out clearly that it can both ascend and descend), or the conversion of the realm itself, is called transformative. In this regard an entirely different state of awareness is experienced. It is an ontologically diverse expression of the Chandian Effect with a new certainty boundary and threshold. Smith calls it vertical ascension, and religiously it is known as *ganz andere*, the *mysterium tremendum*.

In twentieth century western civilization, with its persistent materialism and psychological reductionism (aspects of translation), anything which is exterior to the translative world must be reduced down to a simpler, and thus graspable, component. If the transformative event cannot be collapsed, which Wilber, Smith, and others argue that it cannot, it may be classified as a "hallucination" -- which explains nothing. Or, the "*ganz andere*" experience may be elevated to the unapproachable ideal, goal, or god of the culture. Wilber explicitly details the difference between translation and transformation:

"It comes to the same thing to say that translation is a change in surface structures, and transformation is a change in deep structures. Recall our simple analogy of an eight-story building; each of its floors is a deep structure, while all the particular objects (rooms, furniture, offices, etc.) on each floor are its surface structures. Translation, then, is moving around on one floor; transformation is moving to a different floor altogether.

A third aspect to the development of consciousness that Wilber briefly touched upon in **Up From Eden** but did not define concisely is what I call transfusion, the intersecting of translation with transformation. Often when consciousness

proceeds to a higher level it does not do so wholly, remaining partially within the lower order. It is, therefore, difficult to determine what is genuinely transformative from a radical translative event. And this situation is especially compounded when both forms of development are taking place simultaneously. With a reductionist paradigm we presume that the higher comes from the lower (where in actuality the opposite is true; Smith, 1976) and thus tend to misread transformation as an aberration on the real (read: translative) world. This concept of transfusion, which is why there exists so much confusion in the field, is important in understanding how consciousness can at one end transform and on the other translate but at the same instant not be mutually exclusive.

It should also be added that mistaking the higher with the lower can also work in reverse. For instance, certain religious experiences that appear nonrational are sometimes elevated to a transrational status, when, in fact, they are prerational. Transfusion can work in both directions, thereby causing scholars to commit what Wilber calls a pre/trans fallacy. Materialistic science has a tendency to reduce higher modes of being, whereas uncritical transpersonal psychologists have a proclivity to categorize nonrational experiences as transmundane. Both lack a clear and incisive structuralism according to Wilber.

Toward a Tripartite Classification System of UFO Reports

This leads us to the main thesis of this article: a tripartite classification system of unidentified flying object sighting reports. Employing the preceding terminology on the development of consciousness, we can place experiences of UFOs within three major categories: translative, transformative, and transfusive.

Translation (Fusion: Empirically Verifiable)

Simply put, translative experiences of UFOs are perceptions of natural phenomena within the consensus reality that have yet to be named or identified correctly. For the most part, UFO researchers have been trying to prove the empirical (that is, scientifically verifiable) basis behind unidentified flying objects. This is, above all else, primarily a translative endeavor, attempting to place UFOs within a rational and, therefore, explainable paradigm. However, there is a major problem confronting this attempt. The term UFO has become synonymous with alien creatures or spaceships that have come from other planets or galaxies. The near impossibility of such visits by extraterrestrials has been pointed out by several eminent scientists, including Carl Sagan. Besides the evidence being scant (or nonexistent), the explanations for "close encounters" or sightings do not necessarily have to be exobiological or exotechnological; in fact, as Vallee indicates, they could well be sociological.

Thus, it is likely that most of what we call unidentified flying objects are nothing more than satellites, "falling stars" (meteorites), weather balloons, disguised defense operations and a whole array of natural phenomena. Nevertheless, translative investigations conceivably could encounter extraterrestrials and place their findings before the general public as long as there was empirical data sufficient to support such an event.

Transformation (Diffusion: Experientially Verifiable Through Consciousness)

Among the millions of UFO sightings reported each year, there are a select few that describe vivid and remarkable personal encounters with extraterrestrial beings. No matter what rational (i.e., translative) explanations may be offered to account for this type of experience, the contactee while undergoing the event will perceive it as extremely real (and, in some cases, more real than our own waking world) and will be convinced of its authenticity. Science generally will not be able to grasp this experience in itself and will classify it as an "hallucination", as some scientists have done with Near-Death Experiences, or, if following Carl Sagan's lead, "a miswiring in human neuroanatomy." Although these may look like plausible explanations for such transmundane phenomena, they do not in essence explain the occurrences "as is." Rather, they reduce the experiences down to fit an empirical-sensory model. This reductionism is particularly misleading and, if allowed to dominate our thinking, reduces higher, more unified modes of being.

An example of the basic flaw in this outlook is language. To understand the novel, *The Great Gatsby*, for instance, the whole story must be read. It is on that level alone that the intention of the writer is most completely apprehended. Now you can break the work down to its chapter headings, and then to its paragraph arrangement, then to its sentence structure, and finally to its words. Yet if you were only to examine the letters themselves, not the words they make up, nor the sentences they form, nor the entire paragraphs they construct, and finally the story they compose, then the entire point, intention, and purpose of the novel is lost. Reductionism is often anti-informational and does not increase our understanding but only constricts it. Wilber elaborates:

"The truth of the naturic realm is decided by empirical (sensory) data, but the truth of the mental realm. . . is established only by intersubjective discussion among a community of concerned interpreters, whose data is not sensory but symbolic. The point is that even though truths in the mental-symbolic sphere are non-empirical and cannot be determined by empiric-scientific inquiry, nonetheless they can be

decided. . . I consider exclusive empiricism to be radically and violently reductionistic, no matter how cleverly concealed; the demand for "empirical proof" is really a demand to strip the higher levels of being of their meaning and value and present them only in their aspects that can be reduced to objective, sensory, value-free univalent dimensions."

Thus, following Wilber's argument, there can be transformative UFO encounters that are symbols emerging from a separate ontological ground of consciousness. Some may argue about why there isn't any physical (empirical) proof for such a novel and important event. Just as a dreamer cannot bring the actual "substance" of his or her dream into the waking world, but only its symbols, and just as the materialist cannot carry his or her universe into a dream (except symbolically), so too is it for the UFO contactee who experiences a transformative incident.

Transfusion [Confusion: The Intersection of Translation with Transformation]

The third and last category represents the intersecting of translation with transformation that I have termed transfusion. Perhaps the reason why many UFO reports are so fantastically mixed up, irrational, or weird is because of the fusion of these two forms of development. A good example of this was presented on the ABC news show 20/20. In an attempt to explain how one young man had a close encounter of the third kind, it was shown that at the moment of his experience an underground vault emitted electrical currents of light that formed strange apparitions in the sky. When that same light struck the young man it may have invoked a temporary alteration in his brain and thus produced an hallucination (later recounted as a "UFO abduction"). Viewers of the television program, after hearing two scientists give rational (i.e., translative) explanations for apparent UFO landings, may have become convinced that what the man witnessed was a natural, if uncommon, occurrence. However, the contactee himself, because he underwent a transformative experience (seeing it as real and as objective as the print on this page), could not really accept the translative natural explanation. This confusion of many UFO encounters accounts for why the subject is riddled with fanaticism, religiosity, and garbled hokum.

It should be remembered, however, that simply because a UFO contact is nonrational does not mean that it is necessarily a transrational experience. As Wilber has shown about dreams the same applies to UFO encounters. Psychologists and UFO-ologists must distinguish between prerational states (which, in Wilber's terminology, includes the archaic-uroboric, magical-typhonic, and the mythic-membership stages) and transrational states (which encompasses psychic, subtle and causal structures; Wilber, 1981a).

In light of transfusion, what may be occurring in several UFO encounters is a regression from rationality into subconscious and prepersonal states. Such relapses may be triggered, though, by physiological or translative elements. Carl Jung, for instance, argues along this line in his book **Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth**, pointing out that many UFO sighting reports have the earmarks of being archetypes projected into consciousness by the Collective Unconscious. However, because Jung is not clear in distinguishing between prerational and transrational archetypes (he usually fuses the two; Wilber, 1982b), he fails to differentiate between regressive and progressive UFO encounters. Nevertheless, the important point in all of this is that we investigate all nonrational experiences with a critical structuralism and an empathetic phenomenological hermeneutics.

Conclusion

With the classification system I have proposed we can begin to view reported experiences of UFOs in a nonreductionistic and more understandable light (see Table 1). First, we can distinguish natural occurrences from transmundane apparition, without damaging the intrinsic quality of the experience itself. Second, though we may continue to search for authentic translative encounters from life forms outside of our own solar system, our main emphasis (in light of transformation) will be to develop a state-of-consciousness-specific understanding of UFOs. And thirdly, with transfusive experiences -- where translation and transformation intersect -- our investigation will no longer be hampered by the apparent confusion of such incidents, but will be able to examine the close link between experiential modes of knowing and empirical sensory data.

Hence, what I am arguing for in the field of UFO studies is the same thing that Ken Wilber in *A Sociable God* argues for in the study of religious phenomena: a hierarchical structuralism. Because UFOs are not merely extraterrestrial spacecraft, but a whole array of psychological, sociological, and even religious phenomena, a "transcendental sociology" is needed in order that UFO studies does not fall prey to materialistic reductionism or uncritical phenomenological hermeneutics.

Indeed, such a transpersonal structuralism is concordant with the Chandian Effect. When the certainty boundary is questioned intensively, or naturally transcended, the attractive and binding force of that level of consciousness

recedes, revealing the tentative nature of its existence. As Wilber has clearly indicated there is an ascendant ontology behind the evolution of the universe, one which is marked by an increasing degree of awareness. This idea must be kept in the forefront of UFO-ologists' minds, because unidentified flying objects are more than a exotechnological issue.

By applying the tripartite paradigm that I have proposed (which will, of course, become more sophisticated and exact in time) it will serve as a critical normative to the UFO phenomena, allowing for a much needed structural adjudication. For instance, in looking back at my experiences atop Sawan Ashram in Old Delhi, India, it would appear that what I experienced was not remarkably ganz andere, but was most likely a peculiar translative event with naturalistic explanations. However, what Jean Lyotard witnessed in Southern France, or what Faqir Chand saw in Basra Bagdad, was of a transformative dimension, in that a higher state of awareness was experienced.

The real mystery, therefore, is not in alien space creatures who prey upon naive inhabitants, but in the very nature of attention. To comprehend the restraining certainty hold of the Chandian Effect and how consciousness evolves through its various boundary thresholds is the most important frontier awaiting the study of UFOs. The problem, as several UFO-ologists have already stated, has not been a case of "unidentified" but one of "misidentified".

Postscript

Although I still hold that the tripartite schema via Wilber and Chand is useful when studying unidentified flying objects, it has become clearer to me -- especially after hundreds of individuals now claim to have sightings of Elvis -- that cultural values and needs plays a huge part in any kind of religious (quasi or otherwise) phenomenon. True we should still be open to the faint possibility that there may be some kind of alien contact in the future, but the overwhelming evidence suggests that we have yet to be visited by E.T.'s. It seems far more likely that what we classify as close encounters of the third or fourth kind are really misidentified projectiles of our own psycho-social biography. What is truly impressive in all of this, of course, is the mind's ability to adapt to new cultural trends with such religious zeal. The power behind all of this is the brain's own chemistry which gives such tremendous hardware (conviction, if you will) to the wide variance of religious or cultural ideas. Such ideas may not be real in any ontological sense of the term, but they nevertheless "feel" real because of the brain's amazing plasticity and ability to energize whatever it is conned into believing. Thus the current rage in U.F.O.'s says much more about our almost infinite desire to believe in almost anything (regardless of truth, facticity, or common sense) than it does about some significant exo-biological invasion from Sirius.

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Chapter Nine

INNER VISIONS AND RUNNING TRAINS

Faqir Chand Meets the Tibetan Book of the Dead

One of the most remarkable aspects about the **Tibetan Book of the Dead** (or, more accurately speaking, The Bardo Thotrol) [1] is the principle that whatever one perceives during the dying process is ultimately illusory. Experiences of seeing inner light, hearing wondrous melodies, and feeling sensations of being out of the body, according to The Bardo Thotrol, are but momentary reflections of one's own psychological condition. As such, they are not to be valued in and of themselves, since they cannot by their nature reveal the ultimate truth, but only -- even if magnificently -- obscure it.

The reason for this is simple, if profound: whatever one sees in the dying process is a projection from one's own self. Since this self/soul/ego in Buddhism is the root cause of man's suffering, and not a real and permanent condition, anything which reinforces, glamorizes, or even elevates its status is misleading and generative of delusion. The key to enlightenment in Mahayana Buddhism, unlike Christianity, is not salvation of the soul, but rather its annihilation as a continued sensation. Therefore, The Tibetan Book of the Dead is a practical text on how to carry out the process of death to its terminal apex: extermination of the individual self. At first glance this may seem a bit extreme, especially to those steeped in Western religions which place a higher value on personal immortality, but in light of Buddha's teachings it is perfectly consistent with his philosophy which views death -- real death -- in a very positive light.

What is perhaps most intriguing about the Tibetan Book of the Dead, at least from a scientific perspective, is its thoroughly rational and skeptical character. Although the text does instruct the neophyte to accept the clear void light as one's own, it does not describe in precise terms what that light is. Instead, it concentrates on what the light is not. It is not anything which can be seen, heard, touched or felt -- even on a higher or more elevated plane of awareness. It is, on the contrary, the suchness or context or spectrum out of which all things operate, but in and of itself cannot be grasped as any particular thing. Thus it is always identified through negation (neti, neti; "not this, not that") or through negative images: emptiness, void, vacuity, etc. It is, if we can describe it at all, no-thing.

The implications for the dying lama are clear: Do not accept whatever may arise in the intermediate stage just after death, for each apparition betrays its real origin, imputing a sense of reality and permanence upon something which has neither. Realize, rather, that nirvana is the source from which all visions arise and is therefore itself not a vision. Or, put in more philosophical terms, truth is the condition from which all conditions arise -- itself not being a secondary effect.

Surprisingly, one of the more lucid insights on the philosophy of the Tibetan Book of the Dead comes from a Hindu mystic, named **Baba Faqir Chand**, who apparently was not familiar with the original Tibetan text or its English translation. Although Faqir was not conversant with the Bardo Thotrol, he was nevertheless steeped in its philosophy as taught to him by his guru, Shiv Brat Lal of Gopiganj. Faqir Chand, like his lama counterparts, spent much of his life in meditation, attempting to consciously go through the dying process in order to prepare himself for his final exit. However, unlike others of his kind, Faqir left a detailed account of his some seventy plus years of meditation (ranging from 3 to 12 hours daily) which led up to his enlightenment. The result is a richly detailed account which provides a thorough understanding of how inner visions and the like are projected in the intermediate stages between life and death.

"As the Bardo Thodol [sic] text makes very clear by repeated assertions, none of all these deities or spiritual beings has any real individual existence any more than have human beings. "It is quite sufficient for thee (i.e., the deceased percipient) to know that these apparitions are (the reflections of) thine own thought-forms." They are merely the consciousness- content visualized, by karmic agency, as apparitional appearances in the Intermediate state -- airy nothings woven into dreams."

--**Tibetan Book of the Dead** [2]--

"Now, you see no Jesus Christ comes from without in anybody's visions. No Rama, no Krishna, no Buddha, and no Baba Faqir comes from without to anybody. The visions are only because of the impressions and suggestions that a disciple has already accepted in his mind. These impressions and suggestions appear to him like a dream. No body comes from without. This is the plain truth."

--**Baba Faqir Chand** [3]--



What strikes the reader is the remarkable similarity between both texts. Whereas the Bardo Thotrol is written mostly in second person and third person, listing instructions for the departing soul, The Unknowing Sage is in first person, presenting the reader with Faqir Chand's frank autobiographical admissions about his meditative life. Yet, in both texts the respective philosophies coincide: 1) the illusory nature of religious visions; 2) the limitations of knowledge, both rational and transmundane; and 3) the principle that the ego/self/soul is the real cause of man's unenlightened state.

How Faqir Chand came to this realization is an interesting story in itself, especially for someone steeped in the Radhasoami tradition. From a very early age, Faqir was prone towards mystical experiences, oftentimes seeing religious visions of Krishna and Rama, who would, we are told, instruct Faqir on various aspects of his religious life. Eventually, however, Faqir became so distraught in his quest for God-Realization that he became hysterical and stopped eating. As Faqir recollects:

"Once I wept for twenty-four hours continuously for a glimpse of the Lord. Doctors were called in. They administered medicine to me. At about five o'clock in the morning I saw in a vision the form of Maharishi Shiv Brat Lal [Faqir's eventual guru]. He drew water from a nearby well and helped me take a bath, and then told me his address in Lahore. This experience convinced me that God had incarnated Himself in the form of Maharishi Shiv Brat Lal. " [4]

Faqir's experience convinced him that Shiv Brat Lal was an incarnation of the Lord. After ten months of correspondence, Faqir received initiation from his preceptor into the Radhasoami faith in 1905. [5] It was not until the end of World War One, though, that Faqir received his first glimpse of enlightenment. For prior to this time (1919), Faqir accepted whatever inner sights and sounds he beheld in meditation as true and objective. The turning point came after a battle in Hamidia in Iraq. Working as an inspector for the railway station, Faqir and his group came under heavy enemy attack. Fearing for his life, Faqir prayed internally for help from his guru, Shiv Brat Lal. Almost miraculously, Shiv Brat Lal appeared to Faqir in his inner vision. As Faqir recalls:

"I too was shaken with the fear of death. In this very moment of fear, the Holy Form of Hazur Data Dayal Ji appeared before me and said, "Faqir, worry not, the enemy has not come to attack but to take away their dead. Let them do that. Don't waste your ammunition." I sent for the Subedar Major and told him about the appearance of my Guru and his directions concerning the enemy. The Subedar Major followed the directions of my Guru. The rebel Jawans came and carried away their dead without attacking our positions. By six o'clock in the morning, our airplanes came and they dropped the necessary supplies. Our fears vanished. We gained courage. We were safe." [6]

Though Faqir was overjoyed by this miracle, he did not appreciate its full import until some three months later when he realized that it was a projection of his own mind. When Faqir asked Shiv Brat Lal about his appearance, the guru said that he knew nothing whatsoever about it. Moreover, around the time Faqir saw the miraculous form of his guru, Faqir's friends were also in danger and prayed to God. But instead of Shiv Brat Lal appearing to them, Faqir Chand's radiant form manifested and saved their lives. When Faqir was informed about this incident he was "wonder struck":

"After about three months, the fighting came to an end and the Jawans retired to their barracks. I returned to Bagdad, where there were many satsangis. When they learned of my arrival, they all came together to see me. It was all very unexpected and a surprising scene for me. I asked them, "Our Guru Maharaj is at Lahore. I am not your Guru. Why do you worship me?" They replied in unison, "On the battle field we were in danger. Death lurked over our heads. You appeared before us in those moments of danger and gave us direction for our safety. We followed your instructions and thus were saved." I was wonder struck by this surprising explanation of theirs. I had no knowledge of their trouble. I, myself, being in danger those days of combat, had not even remembered them. " [7]

Thus, it was through a series of remarkable events that Faqir began to question the authenticity of his inner visions. Instead of accepting whatever appeared to him during his voyages out of the body Faqir doubted them and attempted to find the source from which all such visions arise. Faqir's adventures began to dovetail at this point with the underlying philosophy of the Bardo Thotrol: "That all phenomena are transitory, are illusory, are unreal, and non-existent save in the sangsaric mind perceiving them. . . That in reality there are no such beings anywhere as gods, or demons, or spirits, or sentient creatures -- all alike being phenomena dependent upon a cause. . . That this cause is a yearning or a thirsting after sensation, after the unstable sangsaric existence." [8]

Eventually, Faqir dismissed his visionary encounters as nothing but subtle obstructions of maya. It was at this point that Faqir's meditation took a new turn: instead of enjoying the bliss of inner sights and sounds, Faqir turned his attention to the source from which these manifestations arose. And in so doing, Faqir no longer became attracted to visions of Krishna, Rama, or even his guru, Shiv Brat Lal. Comments Faqir:

"O'Dayal's mother, whom you see within and whom you love within is your own creation, your own child. You, yourself, create the image of Shiv Brat Lal in your center of Trikuti, while other devotees create ideals such as Krishna, Rama, or other Gods at the same center and enjoy their vision. Man is basically ignorant about the reality. Mother Bhagyawati is not a lonely example. I too suffered many hardships due to his very ignorance." [9]

Faqir's insights, interestingly, tally with Book One of the Tibetan Book of the Dead. As Evans-Wentz comments:

"These Deities [manifestations of various gods and goddess in the intermediate plane] are in ourselves. They are not something apart from us. . . In this esoteric sense, the Lotus Order of Deities represent the deified principles of the vocal functions of ourselves. . . ." [10]

In this new chapter in Faqir's spiritual quest, he began to develop a dispassion for anything which arose in his meditation -- be it delightful or wrathful. Instead Faqir began to query, "Who is it that sees the light? Who is it that hears the sound?" In other words, what is it that experiences this world and worlds beyond it? No doubt, Faqir reasoned, it is consciousness. But what is that? wondered Faqir. The answer would haunt Faqir for the rest of his life, for he realized that no matter what spiritual practices he may do he would never know. It was simply incomprehensible, a mystery without limitation. To Faqir the haunting aspect about this discovery was that no human being (not even avatars, saints, or gurus), he surmised, could possibly know. Indeed, it was this very unknowability which constituted man's enlightenment, or so Faqir intuited. Argues Faqir:

"I do not proclaim that whatever I say is correct or final. Whatever I say is the conclusion of my experience of life. Nature is unfathomable. No one has known it. A small germ in a body cannot know the whole body. Similarly (a) human being is like a small germ in a vast Creation. How can he claim to have known the entire creation? Those who say that they have known are wrong. No one can describe or even know the entire creation. Up to a certain extent to which man's mind has access, one can say something. But nobody can tell about the entire universe. It is indescribable."

Paradoxically buoyed by this intuition, Faqir began to immerse himself more and more into the clear void light, forgetting himself and his quest in the process. Although Faqir's extraordinary excursions took place while he was still alive, and not in a near-death state, his experiences reinforce the general philosophy of the Bardo Thotrol about liberation.

"O Son of noble family, (name), listen. Now the pure luminosity of the dharmata is shining before you; recognize it. O son of noble family, at this moment your state of mind is by nature pure emptiness, it does not possess any nature whatever, neither substance or quality such as colour, but it is pure emptiness; this is the dharmata. . . This mind of yours is inseparable luminosity and emptiness in the form of a great mass of light, it has no birth or death, therefore it is the Buddha of Immortal Light. To recognize this is all that is necessary." [11]

What exactly this emptiness or luminosity is cannot, by definition, be described. In the Tibetan Book of the Dead the emphasis is on recognizing one's true nature, that which is no-thing in particular but rather the field in which all things arise -- itself being visionless, though producing visions; itself being structureless, though exhibiting structure; itself being non-existent, though producing existence. The clear void light is absolutely paradoxical, since the "I" cannot grasp it, nor can the mind by its subject/object dualism conceive it. Ken Wilber, a well regarded transpersonal theorist and practicing Zen Buddhist, describes it this way:

"The Absolute is both the highest state of being and the ground of being; it both the goal of evolution and the ground of evolution, the highest stage of development and the reality or suchness of all stages of development; the highest of all conditions and the Condition of all conditions; the highest rung in the ladder and the wood out of which the ladder is made. Anything less than that paradox generates either pantheistic reductionism, on the one hand, or wild and radical transcendentalism on the other. . . ." [12]

Thus Faqir, following his Tibetan counterparts, eschewed even the pure light and sound which was beyond form, and attached himself to no-thing, allowing himself, as he so astutely put it, to "hang on the gallows." But in so doing, Faqir broke with Radhasoami tradition, which advocates surat shabd yoga (lit., "uniting the soul with the divine inner sound"), and eventually became regarded as a "heretic." [13] Near the end of his life, Faqir grew closer to the philosophical principles of Buddhism, particularly Mahayana, as outlined in the Bardo Thotrol. Indeed, if one were only to look at his later writings, one would come away with the impression that Faqir came from a lineage of Tibetan lamas. The following passage is particularly relevant in this regard:

"O' Faqir these satsangis have taught you the method of hanging at the gallows. Only this experience

of the manifestation of my form at different places, of which I am never aware, has changed my life. . . My experiences prove that Yogi, Meditator, Guru, Disciple and even the aspirant of salvation are in bondage. . . These people who create my form with their mental forces to fulfill their worldly desires are not interested to know the Truth. They do not hang themselves on the gallows, because they depend on the support of my Form. Whereas to a man on the gallows there is no support. This is the highest stage." [14]

It is precisely this letting go -- both of the objects which entice the mind and the mind itself -- which constitutes the final meditation in the Tibetan Book of the Dead. When this is done, no rebirth is possible, since there is no one left to reap experiences. But what happens to those who cannot let go into the clear void light? What is their plight? According to the Bardo Thotrol, such beings have a series of lesser options, whereby they can take new births in higher or lower dimensions of awareness. Regions upon regions exist where departed beings are enjoying the fruits of their karmic actions. Their fall, so to say, from the empty luminosity is due to one simple, but devastating mistake: they took the apparitions, the lights, the colors, the sounds, and the sensations of the intermediate plane to be real, and not as projections of their own self-created karma. In a phrase, they bought the dream as reality and were thus duped. Concerning these beings, the Tibetan Book of the Dead says:

"O son of noble family, if you do not recognize them [the various lights and apparitions] as your projections, whatever meditation practice you have done during your life, you have not met with this teaching, the coloured light will frighten you, the sounds will bewilder you and the rays of light will terrify you. If you do not understand this essential point of the teachings you will not the recognize the sounds, lights and rays, and so you will wander in samsara." [15]

Faqir Chand also reiterates the teachings of the Bardo Thotrol on this issue of karmic propensities (the principle that karma sways one away from the clear void light at death, if one is not attached beforehand in the empty luminosity). Faqir's frank autobiographical admissions reveal that even a sage as steeped in meditation as he could occasionally fall from the truth and get caught in the whirlpool of attachment. For instance, when Faqir Chand went to sleep he usually attached himself to the light and sound within, but occasionally would get caught up with dreams, falsely believing that he was seeing his father, his son, his wife, trains, and so on. As Faqir points out:

"This night I had a dream in which I saw running trains. An accident occurred; I carried my luggage; my father (whom I was afraid of) met me ahead. Then I met my mother; my first wife was also sitting there. I inquired from my wife, "What about your wounded leg? Is your leg now alright? Are you not my wife?" Meanwhile I awoke and attuned my Self to the Shabd (Inner Sound Current). . . All these deeds, thoughts and feelings where selfish motives are involved shall positively have their reaction upon the individual concerned, either in the waking state or in sleep. Why do I say so? This is my experience. Ever since the establishment of Manavta Mandir I have never dreamed about it. Why? Because my Self is neither attached to Mandir nor to any of you. But why do my father, mother, wife and railway trains appear time and again in my dreams? Because my Self was attached to them." [16]

Faqir's observation of what occurs in the dream state also holds true for what happens in the intermediate plane after death, since both involve the same fundamental rule: attachment creates repetition and thus the cycle of samsara continues. Liberation, both in the Tibetan Book of the Dead and in The Unknowing Sage, is non-attachment to anything or anyone. Only then can the bubble or knot of self-existence be undone.

When Faqir Chand was asked what would happen to him after death, he frankly remarked, "I don't know." When asked to elaborate, he proceeded to give a gist of his entire philosophy of life; not surprisingly, as I have attempted to point out in this paper, Faqir's outlook echoes almost point by point The Tibetan Book of the Dead:

"So what I have understood about Nam is that it is the true knowledge of the feelings, visions, and images that are seen within. This knowledge is that all the creations of the waking, dreaming and deep sleep modes of consciousness are nothing but samskaras (impressions which are in truth unreal) that are produced by the mind. What to speak about others, even I am not aware of my own Self (in dreams). Who knows what may happen to me at the time of death? I may enter the state of unconsciousness, enter the state of dreams and see railway trains. . . How can I make a claim about my attainment of the Ultimate? The truth is that I know nothing." [17]

Evans-Wentz, writing some forty years earlier than Faqir, makes the following observation concerning the Bardo Thotrol:

"It is not necessary to suppose that all the dead in the Intermediate State experience the same phenomena, any more than all the living do in the human world, or in dreams. . . As a man is taught, so

he believes. . . ." [18]

In the end, Faqir's death was an untypical one. In April of 1981 he installed his spiritual successor, Dr. I.C. Sharma, at Manavta Mandir, Hoshiarpur, and then proceeded to fly to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in the United States to conduct his fifth world tour. He was ninety-five years old. But just prior to departing from the Delhi airport, Faqir was asked in a tape-recorded meeting by a long-time friend and devotee when he would be coming back. Faqir, in an unusually prophetic reply, responded: "When I come back, it will be in black box." And so it was. Several weeks later in a Pittsburgh hospital Faqir after undergoing a cardiac arrest and suffering in a coma for several days died. [19] Days later his body was sent back to India in a casket for final cremation rights.

One can only wonder if the unknowing sage melted into the empty luminosity or into the dream world of running trains.

[1] I will be using two translations here for my article: Evans-Wentz's famous work, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (New York: Causeway Books, 1973); and Francesca Mantle's and Chogyam Trungpa's *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1975).

[2] Op. cit., pages 32 -33.

[3] Op. cit., page 4

[4] Op. cit., page 22.

[5] For more on the Radhasoami tradition, see *Radha Swami Teachings* by Lekh Raj Puri (Beas: Radha Soami Foundation, 1967).

[6] Op. cit., page 26. Also see Lane's "The Himalayan Connection" (*Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, Fall 1984) for more on the psychological implications of Faqir's visionary experiences.

[7] Op. cit., page 26. It should be pointed out that just prior to leaving to Iraq, Shiv Brat Lal informed Faqir that the ultimate guru was within one's self, nowhere on the outside. In fact, during this meeting, Shiv Brat Lal appointed Faqir as his spiritual successor, blessing his disciple with the following words: "Faqir, you are yourself the Supreme Master of your time. Start delivering spiritual discourses to the seekers and initiate them into the path of Sant Mat. In due course of time, your own satsangis [followers] will prove to be your "True Guru," and it is through your experiences with them that the desired secret of Sant Mat will be revealed to you." [Op. cit., page 25.]

[8] Evans-Wentz, op. cit., page 66

[9] Op. cit., page 48.

[14] Op. cit., page 50.

[15] Freemantle et al, op. cit., page 41.

[16] Op. cit., page 45.

[17] Op. cit., page 47.

[18] Evans-Wentz, op. cit., page 33.

[19] For more on Faqir's death, please refer to I.C. Sharma's Hindi biography of Faqir Chand entitled **Sidha Satpurusha Faqir Baba**.

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Chapter Ten

THE HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE OF RELIGIOUS VISIONS

"I do not know whether my realizations are right or wrong. I do not make any claim that my realization is final. People say that my Form manifests to them and helps them in solving their worldly as well as mental problems, but I do not go anywhere, nor do I know anything about such miraculous instances. My Guru had directed me, "Faqr, change the mode of preaching before abandoning this mortal frame." Now, after such experiences, I question myself, "Faqr Chand, what mode of preaching do you wish to change? Which teachings should I alter?" The change that I can make in the present mode of preaching is "O Man, your real helper is your own Self and your own Faith, but you are badly mistaken and believe that somebody from without comes to help you. No Hazrat Mohammed, no Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, or any other God, Goddess, or Guru comes from without. This entire game is that of your impressions and suggestions which are ingrained upon your mind through your eyes and ears and of your Faith and Belief." This is the change that I am ordained to bring about. . . ."

--Baba Faqr Chand, 1976

In the summer of 1978 I visited Faqr Chand at his ashram, Manavta Mandir, in North India. At that time I had several personal interviews with the sage. It became exceedingly apparent to myself and Professor Mark Juergensmeyer (who visited with the sage in late August of 1978) that Faqr was something of an anomaly amongst Indian gurus. For, although the then ninety-two year-old saint had a rather large and devoted following, estimated to be in the tens of thousands, he absolutely disclaimed himself of any miracles attributed to his spiritual work, saying quite frankly that they were products of either the devotee's karma or intense faith. Indeed, it was this very insight which allegedly led Faqr to his own enlightenment.

When Faqr Chand began to initiate disciples into surat shabd yoga (lit., "the union of the attention with the inner spiritual sound") at the request of his master (Maharishi Shiv Brat Lal, who was famous for his numerous spiritual writings in Urdu), a most curious thing happened. His devotees began reporting that Faqr's radiant form appeared inside their meditations. Others related miracles that were caused by Faqr's prasad (blessed food), letters, or advice. However, all during this time Faqr claims that he had absolutely no knowledge or awareness of his form appearing to distant provinces or performing miracles to the sick and dying. As Faqr himself wrote, "People say that my Form manifests to them and helps them in solving their worldly as well as mental problems, but I do not go anywhere, nor do I know anything about such miraculous instances."

It was at this point when Faqr asked himself, "What about the visions that appear to me? Are they a creation of my own mind, and does my guru also not know about his appearances to me?" Only then, according to Faqr, did he realize the truth: **All manifestations, visions, and forms that are seen within are mental creations.**

After his realization, Faqr began preaching his belief that all saints, from Buddha, Christ, Kabir, to even his own master Shiv Brat Lal are ignorant about the miracles or inner experiences attributed to them. In a paper given to the American Academy of Religion in March 1981, I used the term, **The Unknowing Hierophany**, to describe what Faqr Chand believes, that is, a "Divine" vehicle within the temporal world that is unaware of its spiritual manifestations.

Though Faqr is probably the most outspoken, other great religious leaders, saints and mystics have expounded on this same unknowingness. However, it is not seen by most (especially by devotees) as an explanation of their subservience to the Great Mystery, but rather as a statement designed to exhibit a saint's humility, or, as a tacit attempt for concealing his real mission and purpose.

Jesus, for instance, is reported in the Gospel of Mark as asking the crowd that was following him, "Who touched me?" After this, a woman who had suffered from a "flow of blood" for twelve years came up to Jesus and told him about her plan for a Divine cure. By a brief touch a miracle happened, and she was cured from hemorrhaging. At this Jesus said, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. . . ."

The famed sage, **Ramana Maharshi**, when asked about Jesus' power to perform miracles, substantiates what Faqr Chand had taught for over forty years:

"Was Jesus conscious of his powers. . . . Such manifestation is as real as your own reality. In other words, when you identify yourself with the body as in jagrat, you see gross objects; when in subtle body or in mental plane as in svapna, you see objects equally subtle; in the absence of identification as in sushupti, you see nothing. The objects seen bear relation to the state of the seer. The same applies to visions of God."

Another expression of this unknowingness is given in a speech by **Charan Singh**, the deceased Satguru at Beas who commanded perhaps the largest following of any master in India. In 1951, when Charan Singh was appointed the successor to Jagat Singh, he told the vast gathering of devotees,

"I feel that I am like a stone idol in a temple. According to their notions of love, some bathe it with cold water, some with hot water, and some deck it in fine clothes; but it is still an idol all the same."

Along with this "unknowingness" there is also the internal, ever-present supreme knowledge which saints and sages have described as the hallmark of enlightenment. Jesus said, "The Father and I are one." The Sufi martyr, Mansur al-Hallaj, shouted before his execution, "ana'l-Haqq" (I am the Truth). Sarmad, the Jewish-Indian saint, exclaimed, "I am King of Kings." And Meister Eckhart, in slightly different language, wrote, "The eye with which God sees me is the same eye which I perceive Him."

However, this kind of knowledge cannot be equated with logical, objective learning. The former is the realization of one's real and eternal nature, a transcendental experience of oneness. The latter is concerned with dualistic thinking, knowing about things; hence, it is based upon an illusory division of the world into two separate components: the subject and the object. Hence, when saints talk about the ultimate knowledge, they are referring to the Ground of Being, that which is the condition of all subsequent conditions. Consequently, an enlightened master may not know anything about academic subjects such as quantum mechanics, anthropology, or critical history.

The Manifestation of a Tibetan Monk

A crucial question arises at this junction, however, with regard to spiritual manifestations. If Christ, Kabir, and Faqir Chand were not aware of how their miraculous powers manifested, does it then hold that all such visions, etc., are individual creations, determined by the faith and concentration of zealous devotees? At first glance, the answer would appear to be "yes," because many internal visions are not of factual and historical human entities, but of amalgamated characters, mythic beings, and fictional heroines -- some whose life stories may be entirely based upon the writer's own creative mind.

One such instance concerns a Tibetan monk who is allegedly over five-hundred years old and resides in a remote hut in the Himalayas. The author has had personal correspondence over several years with members of an esoteric contemporary religious organization who profess to have extraordinary visions of this Tibetan monk, describing in detail his appearance and peculiar dress. However, documentary research has shown that the founder of this organization appears to have created the Tibetan, basing the monk's life story on the biographies of Kirpal Singh, Sawan Singh, Shiv Dayal Singh, Kabir, and several other real-life gurus.

What all this presents is a devastating problem in the study of religious visions. If there is no functional necessity to distinguish between a vision of a genuine historical personage and a fictional guru, does it really matter then if one has a vision of Christ, a blue Krishna, a living saint, or the local minister? Indeed, are all religious visions qualitatively the same?

Wilber's Transpersonal Structuralism: The Adjudication Of Religious Visions

According to Ken Wilber there is a qualitative difference between religious visions, precisely because not all spiritual manifestations occur on the same structural level. For instance, if one sees an image of Jesus in a dream while asleep, it would probably be qualitatively different from one seen with eyes open while awake. The difference here is not so much one of content as it is of context.

Since there are various levels of consciousness (creating several contextual layers), the first step in any critical examination of religious visions, Wilber contends, is to perform a hierarchical structural analysis so as to determine on which level a particular manifestation is taking place. Wilber, drawing from his study of the Perennial Philosophy (the term was first coined by Leibniz), postulates a dynamic spiritual cartography in which the various stages of consciousness are mapped out. Such a schema, he argues, allows for a much needed adjudication for the variety of religious expressions by assigning them a place in the hierarchy. Elaborates Wilber:

"The hierarchical nature of this spectrum will give us a critical-normative sociology of religion, one that is

capable of structurally analyzing various religious expressions, assigning them a spot in the hierarchy, consequently adjudicating their degree of authenticity, and accordingly pronouncing that, in terms of an overall critical sociological theory, this or that religious engagement is higher than this or that other religious engagement, precisely as we now say, for example, a stage-6 moral response is higher than a stage-4 response. . . ."

Wilber's developmental hierarchy begins at the lowest stage of man's evolution (what he terms the "archaic" -- stage 1) and culminates at the zenith of human attainments (the asymptotic limit of Brahman or Godhead--stage 10). These stages may also be classified under three main categories: subconscious/pre-personal; self-conscious/personal; and super-conscious/trans-personal.

Following Wilber's schema, religious visions -- by definition and implication -- are non-rational occurrences taking place on either the subconscious/pre-personal level or the superconscious/trans-personal level. It is important to note here, however, that just because all visions, as such, are non-rational, does not mean that they are necessarily trans-rational. A distinction must be made between subconscious and superconscious manifestations. If this is not done, a "pre/trans fallacy" occurs, resulting in the confusion of infantile images with genuine spiritual apparitions.

Many so-called religious visions, for instance, may be nothing more than vivid images which manifest quite normally while one is dreaming. Simply because an image is of a holy or revered personage does not qualify it automatically as a trans-personal manifestation. As the late Faqir Chand asserted, a saint, or a guru, does not consciously project his form; rather, it is the intense faith and concentration of the devotee who creates the image within. Therefore, the proper adjudication of spiritual visions lies not in the manifest content of the "apparition,"p; but in the context and structure wherein one beholds the sacred image.

The important question concerning the authenticity of religious visions, as Wilber clearly points out, is not one of content (structurally speaking, it matters little if one beholds the Virgin Mary, Buddha, or Krishna), but of context. That is, on which level of consciousness is the vision seen? Is it a subconscious dream image? A psychic intuition? Or, a genuine encounter with a subtle plane deity? It is only after such a contextual-structure determination that the critical phenomenologist can then proceed to analyze the content of the vision properly, assessing its degree of legitimacy. That is, how well does the particular image integrate the perceiver, within that hierarchical level?

The aspects of authenticity and legitimacy are necessary in determining: 1) the level of consciousness wherein the vision is occurring; and 2) the degree of validity that the particular image has for integrating one to that structural level of adaptation. Ken Wilber, in *A Sociable God*, explains these two important concepts in further detail:

"Degree of authenticity" refers to the relative degree of actual transformation delivered by a given religion (or world view). This is a vertical scale: "more authentic" means more capable of reaching a higher level (and not merely integrating the present level). "Degree of legitimacy" refers to the relative degree of integration, meaning-value, good mana, ease of functioning, avoidance of taboo, and so forth within any given level. This is a horizontal scale; "more legitimate" means more integrative-meaningful within that level.

Hence, following these important distinctions made by Wilber, there can be a hierarchical structural adjudication of visions, determining the authenticity of the religious encounter (employing Wilber's developmental cartography, is it happening on stage 3,4,7, or 8?). And secondly, there can be a horizontal-translative appraisalment, measuring the degree of legitimacy that the particular apparition has.

For instance, if one beholds an image of the previously described Tibetan in a dream, it is, according to Wilber, an inauthentic vision because it occurs on a subconscious/prepersonal level (stages, 3, 4, or 5). Authentic religious experiences, he argues, begin only after the rational - egoic structure (i.e., the psychic--stage 7). However, such an apparition may have a significant degree of legitimacy if it helps integrate an important myth or world view advocated by a movement.

With regard to visions of fictional heroes, saints, and masters, it is conceivable that an earnest devotee may have an authentic experience of a fabricated mystic in the psychic-subtle planes. However, the authenticity of this encounter has nothing to do with the image-content as such. Rather, it is the structure itself which gives numinous power to the experience. Whether or not a guru or a master is a literary invention or a historical personage matters very little in terms of authenticity; it does have an important role, though, in determining the degree of legitimacy of the encounter.

Therefore, Faqir Chand's implication, that all visions are illusions, needs qualifications. First, Faqir Chand was making his statement presumably from a ninth and tenth plane perspective (the causal-transcendental stages); and, from such a state all of the lower regions may be illusory in that they are subsumed by the Infinite or Brahman.

Secondly, Faqir Chand, because he may be speaking from a transcendental point of view, could give the erroneous impression that a dream experience and a subtle plane encounter are one and the same. Actually, Faqir Chand stated in a July, 1978 interview that he was aware of the distinction between **dream visions** and subtle-plane manifestations; however, he considered both to be illusions and unnecessary in light of God-Realization, which is by implication groundless and visionless. And finally, though Faqir Chand asserts that the guru is not conscious of his spiritual manifestations, this does not mean that there is not qualitative difference between such apparitions. Rather, as we have noted, there could be a developmental hierarchy involved in religious visions.

With such qualifications aside, it is, nevertheless, important to realize (along with Faqir Chand) that authentic visions (be they psychic, subtle or causal) eventually give way to the Transcendental Reality of the Absolute which is the source from where all life manifests -- Itself being visionless, groundless, without form or structure, void of center, infinite in all dimensions. . . .

By understanding the hierarchical nature behind spiritual manifestations, we begin to see how our study of religious visions might be structured. First, the dimension of unknowingness, as related by Faqir Chand and illustrated elsewhere, is an essential a priori foundation. In the study of religious visions, this represents a "bracketing out" of causal questions, an acceptance as valid, though not reducible, though not explainable, of the phenomena "as is." This serves as a vital informational stand, much like the phenomenological approach in near-death studies taken by Raymond Moody, Kenneth Ring, and Michael Sabom. However, as Frits Staal (*Exploring Mysticism*) and Ken Wilber (*A Sociable God*) point out, this very position -- that of phenomenological hermeneutics -- can become anti-informational if allowed to stagnate. Comments Wilber:

"But taken in and by itself, hermeneutics seems finally to suffer a series of unhappy limitations. Foremost among these is its radicalization of situational truth and its consequent lack of a universal or even quasi-universal critical dimension, a way to judge the actual validity, not just interpretive mesh, of a religious truth claim. Krishna may have been transcending, but was the Hopi really producing rain? How are we to differentiate the authentic from the less authentic engagements?"

Therefore, the study of visions, though it has to begin from a non-reductionistic posture, can move away from a purely phenomenological investigation into a critical developmental structuralism, so that the authenticity and legitimacy of the encounter can be fully explored and assessed. Hence, the examination of religious manifestations -- and perhaps most religious claims -- becomes both a psychologically and sociologically useful discipline in evaluating the nature of human existence.

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EXPOSING CULTS: WHEN THE SKEPTICAL MIND CONFRONTS THE MYSTICAL

David C. Lane
Garland Publishing, Inc. (1994)

Chapter Twelve

THE SPIRITUAL CRUCIBLE

A Critical Guide to America's Cultic Renaissance

The 1980's may be known in the future by spiritual aspirants as the decade of the fallen guru. Already a number of prominent and respected religious masters in India and elsewhere have had their secret, private lives exposed: hidden Swiss bank accounts; extensive cases of plagiarism; sexual misconduct; violent retaliations against detractors; egotistical power plays; drug trafficking and more.

It is no longer "in" or respectable to follow a guru. The New Age is growing old. The Aquarian Conspiracy is backfiring. The Golden Age of Enlightenment is rusting. What happened to the Consciousness Revolution?

Critical reasoning. Instead of a quantum leap into transformed dimensions of awareness, spiritual seekers have begun to develop a keen sense of discrimination. Since the Jonestown tragedy, it is no longer sensible, according to the general public, to forego one's rational mind in the hope of a transcendent paradise. Crucial questions arise: "If the teachings don't make logical sense on this plane, what is the assurance that they will come together in the higher astral worlds?" - "Why does my teacher have the privilege to rationalize away his/her worldly expressions of anger and lust, as part of his/her awakening method, when my same actions are always called vices to be conquered?" - "Is the thinking mind really the enemy that should be suppressed and fought?"

More and more questions such as these are being posed by serious religious practitioners who are no longer satisfied with purely dogmatic and fundamentalist perspectives on spiritual liberation. Indeed, they argue, if humans are truly striving for an enlightened state then all parts of their being should reflect that truth: the soul, the mind, and the body. To castrate one versus the other (as Descartes did with the mind and the body) is to allow for only a schizophrenic view of the universe. That is, the body is always evil; and the soul always good. God in the meantime ceases to be the Lord of all and becomes the Chosen God of the few. The end result? Politics replaces spirituality.

To overcome this tenacious dualism, certain sincere seekers are discovering ways in which reason helps and promotes spiritual practice. Ken Wilber, perhaps the most articulate spokesman of this emerging group, points out in his ground-breaking overview of human evolution, **Up From Eden**, that critical intelligence is not an obstacle in the soul's progression back to God, but a beneficial and necessary step. To disavow reasoning and its strengths, Wilber emphasizes, is not a progressive way towards Self-Realization, but a regression into mental infancy.

Genuine saints and gurus, though their number may be few, do not ask for blind obedience. Quite the contrary, they demand individual responsibility and maturation in the face of one's real and eternal condition. Unlike their charlatan counterparts, sincere masters invite critical thinking. As one teacher put it, "Question everything (even your guru's actions and teachings) until you satisfy your intellect. Even if you spend your whole lifetime in such an endeavor, it is not time lost, but time gained. You will be building a foundation on rock, not sand."

But, how does one know if his/her spiritual master is authentic or misguided? How can one distinguish between a legitimate and beneficial path and a self-serving and corrupt organization? No doubt these are difficult questions, but they can be answered. This article is an attempt to help clarify many of the muddled issues now facing the spiritual community. It does so by offering a unique **crucible** wherein a series of key questions are asked and examined. Each of these questions is designed to reveal the relative degree of legitimacy and authenticity of one's chosen master and path. For some it will be an awakening experience, while for others it will be an outward confirmation of what they already intuited. In either case the crucible will hopefully spark deeper investigation of all aspects of one's spiritual development.

Although guidelines have been proposed by several religious groups to help would-be seekers decide which path or guru is the highest

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ethnocentrism (the tendency to see other people, cultures, religions, solely in terms of one's own world view). Surely, no critical guide will be exempt from a certain amount of prejudice or bias, but it can be minimized if the template we employ to appraise masters and new movements is drawn from transcultural sources and is interdisciplinary in scope.

To accomplish this aim, the following test was compiled from four distinct schools: 1) Transpersonal Psychology (Ken Wilber, John Welwood, et al.); 2) Advaita Vedanta (Ramana Maharshi, Nisargadatta Maharaj, et al.); 3) Sant Mat (Sawan Singh, Julian P. Johnson, et al.); and 4) Christianity (Mother Teresa, Nicholas of Cusa, et al.); 5) Naturally, not all of these schools are in exact agreement with each other, but taken together they do provide a substantial framework with which interested practitioners can measure the claims of their respective guru and path. Each of the headings will contain examples of individuals or groups who have either embodied the ideal principle or who have gone far astray from it. All of the examples cited are based upon documented research.

1. Does Your Guru/Path Charge Money For Membership?

"Real Masters never charge for their services, nor do they accept payment in any form or any sort of material benefits for their instructions. This is a universal law among Masters, and yet it is an amazing fact that thousands of eager seekers in America and elsewhere, go on paying large sums of money for "spiritual instruction.". Masters are always self-sustaining. They are never supported by their students or by public charity."

--Julian P. Johnson, The Path of the Masters (1939)--

Perhaps the easiest question to ask and have answered by a spiritual guru/path is whether or not their organization charges money for membership. If the answer is yes, it is a clear sign for the "buyer to beware," as almost all groups which assign a fee for their teachings are suspect. Although Self-Realization may entail many requirements, such as giving up ego, greed, lust, and so forth, offering up your wallet or life savings is not one of them.

In America there is a tendency to make a commodity out of anything, even spirituality. Not only is making salvation a marketable item absurd ("Sorry, you don't qualify for the highest, blissful heaven." - "Why not?" - "You forgot to pay last month's subscription dues for soul discourses"), but it allows for a number of unscrupulous individuals to make huge sums of money off naive seekers. Bhagwan Rajneesh, more than any other Indian guru in America, illustrated this fact with his excessive wealth and predilection for Rolls Royces (which amounted to ninety plus).

Although money is necessary to keep movements functioning (the publishing of books, etc.), there is a distinct line between obligatory payments -- even if they are disguised as "love offerings," and unsolicited donations; the latter has justifiable reasons behind it, whereas the former makes religion a business enterprise, with a very lucrative tax shelter.

Interestingly, there are comparatively few spiritual groups which do not charge money for membership. Thus, this first criterion is a rather simple way to ferret out the possibly genuine guru/path from the less valid ones. Check out the movement's financial situation closely, keeping a close eye on where and to whom most of the money collected is going. If the particular organization is resistant to giving out such monetary information, then it can be safely assumed that the guru/path in question is more concerned with fiscal matters than with upliftment of the mind and spirit.

2. Does Your Spiritual Teacher Have A High Standard Of Moral Conduct?

"Once I was coming to India from Bagdad on my annual leave. At Makina Camp, I was waiting for the ship for my homeward journey. As there was yet some time for the arrival of the ship I thought I would have some puffs of "huqqa" (tobacco). So I went to the kitchen of some labourers to collect fire from their place. The workmen had left for their earnings after finishing their meals. A four anna coin was lying near the fireplace. I looked all around (to confirm that nobody was seeing me,) and picked up the four anna coin, collected the necessary fire for my "huqqa" and returned to my bed. When I reached my place, I thought, "you receive 500Rs. per month. Why have you picked up this coin so stealthily?" I repented upon my foolish act and gave away that coin to someone. It is very easy to preach and sermonize others, but most difficult to be practical in one's life."

--Baba Faqir Chand, The Unknowing Sage--

A truly enlightened master is by virtue of his attainment a moral human being. For, unlike most of struggling humanity, the realized sage has transcended the ego and its limitations and become

consciously aware of his real relationship as an indivisible part of God's Being. As such, an enlightened master would exhibit ethical qualities far beyond those manifested by even noble worldly souls. In light of this, it is particularly distressing to note that a large number of so-called gurus are quite unethical in their behavior. This ranges from improper business deals, to sexual misconduct, personal violence, and even criminal activity. As Julian P. Johnson correctly observes:

"If I were looking for a Master, I would first of all make the most critical inspection of the man's life to determine if he had any of the ordinary imperfections of character usually manifested by the average man. If I found him to be a perfect man, when studied as man, I would then begin my study of him as a Guru. But if he failed to pass inspection as a man, I would at once give up the search of him as Guru, or Master."

However, though some teachers have been known to engage in immoral actions, naive followers try to find ways to justify such behavior. The problem with attempting to give metaphysical explanations for what would otherwise be considered "ordinary" events is that it enables ambitious masters to bypass standard morality in the name of a "higher" authority. What is needed in appraising spiritual claims is a religious version of "Occam's Razor" (the scientific/philosophic rule which requires that the simplest of competing theories be preferred to the more complex, or that explanations of unknown phenomena be sought first in terms of known quantities), wherein seekers have a predisposition for the more logical, common sense interpretation of allegedly transcendent actions. Is it really necessary to "explain away" a guru's lust or misdirected practices as being motivated by the Holy Spirit, God, or Mother Shakti? Gurus don't hesitate to point out their devotees' weaknesses, nor should disciples be hesitant in criticizing their teacher's faults when they appear. Critical exchange is crucial and healthy for any type of relationship including teacher/student ones.

3. Does Your Master Make Claims About His/Her Spiritual Development, Powers, or Attainment?

"If any man claims to have attained the highest in spiritual development that claim of itself may be taken as conclusive proof that he has not attained so much."
--Julian P. Johnson, *The Path of the Masters* (1939)--

"Good masters might indeed be divine, but they are also human. Even Christ was said to be one person (Jesus) with two natures (human and divine). Further, the fact that a guru has been thoroughly educated in soul and spirit does not mean he or she has been thoroughly educated in body and mind. I have yet to see a guru run a four-minute mile with his "perfect body" or explain Einstein's special theory of relativity with his "perfect mind."
--Ken Wilber, *Eye to Eye*--

Almost all of the world's great religious scriptures universally acclaim that humility is one of the chief virtues of an enlightened human being. Yet, many of the most popular gurus today speak out quite stridently about their spiritual attainments. Some, like Sathya Sai Baba of South India, even claim to be God incarnated. Others, perhaps less absolutist but nevertheless confident, allege that they have access to the Supreme Being on a day to day basis. It is roughly estimated that there are over a million gurus in India, most of whom claim to have direct contact with the highest Reality and Truth. What is the seeker to do? Whose statements should he/she believe?

None of them. Spirituality, according to true mystics of all ages, is an experiential science, one which demands not blind faith and belief, but rigorous practice and application. Indeed, as Ken Wilber points out, authentic mysticism is a provable discipline since it enables a practitioner to see directly higher, transpersonal regions of consciousness. Therefore, the necessity for "belief" in a teacher's claims is uncalled for. Rather, what is needed is experimental verification of the path he/she advocates. All too often, religious seekers become armchair speculators versus actual practitioners, thereby basing their judgements on a mere intellectual appraisal of the master and not on direct interaction with his/her teachings.

If any guru demands belief in his/her status it is obvious that what they are teaching is not spirituality/mysticism but dogma and conversion. Truly, unless the would-be disciple is already God-Realized, how is he/she to know the spiritual capabilities of his/her master? Mere allegiance will not suffice, nor will any amount of propaganda about the guru's greatness, only daily spiritual practice will do.

Transculturally and throughout the ages, there have been a select number of saints who have embodied the very highest qualities of enlightenment which, contrary to our notions of "other

worldliness," can be manifested in their everyday lives. "By their fruits, you will know them." Some beautiful examples in the 20th century are: Ramana Maharshi, Sawan Singh, and Mother Teresa, each of whom in their own way have expressed an aspect of the divine (knowledge, awareness, and love). Such rare individuals serve as reference points with which to measure the claims of emerging gurus in North America.

4. Does Your Guru/Group Proselytize Vigorously For New Converts?

"Any group "out to save the world" is potentially problematic, because it rests on an archaically narcissistic base that looks "altruistic" or "idealistic" but in fact is very egocentric, very primitive, and very capable of coming to primitive ends by primitive means."

--Ken Wilber, *Eye to Eye*, (1983)--

Regardless of how the proselytization is disguised, any guru/group which advocates a vigorous program of recruiting new converts acts as a dividing force in the society, cutting directly into family and relationships. Such conversionary emphasis has a tendency to create factions where none had existed before: "I am saved; you are still lost." - "I found it; you haven't", and so on. This kind of dualism has many forms, ranging from the blatantly obvious (as we find in fundamentalist Christian and Islamic sects) to the subtly hidden (Est: "Did you get It"; Scientology: "Are you clear" and certain esoteric groups which play on such notions as "initiated" versus "non-initiated", as determining factors of self-worth and social stratification).

Undoubtedly a certain amount of advertisement goes on in every religious movement, even the ones which are adamantly opposed to spreading their teachings publicly (e.g., Soami Bagh and Dayal Bagh in Agra, India). Just the publication of books, texts, and articles is itself a form of advertisement, albeit a limited avenue. The fine line, however is where giving out the message becomes consciously pushing the truth, as not only an alternative but as a required necessity. Wilber points out the danger of such a development:

"Such obsessive drivenness is always open to problematic occasions, not the least of which is the fact that if you have the way, then that end will justify virtually any means, up to and including holy war. And holy war, of course, isn't a sin, it isn't murder, because the people you are killing in order to save aren't really people they're infidels."

If the guru/path really does have a glimpse into the transcendental truth of the universe, then the concern will not be with "preaching" that insight but actually exemplifying it. As is well known in parental and teaching circles, the most accomplished parent/teacher is the one who says the most not with words but with actions. This simple truth, though used as a cliché, should be kept in mind whenever encountering a "new" revelation.

5. Who Appointed Your Teacher to Be a Master?

"Cult leaders are often self-styled prophets who have not studied with great teachers or undergone lengthy training or discipline themselves. . . Many of the most dangerous cultic figures of our times have no such stabilizing context of tradition, lineage or transmission, but are self-proclaimed gurus who sway their followers through their charismatic talents. . ."

--John Welwood, *On Spiritual Authority*--

Successorship controversies are some of the most intricate and confusing issues that a spiritual seeker can face. A number of perplexing questions may arise: "Is my guru really enlightened?" - "Did my teacher truly receive the mantleship from his master?" - "Why is my movement's history disputed by outside scholars?" etc. The forthcoming answers are rarely simple and air-tight. There is always a strange twist, an odd fact, a peculiar story, which upturns even the most stalwart of followers.

The only remedy to doubt is not blind belief or dogma, but the ability to allow the mind to question and to embrace the paradoxical nature of the world. This kind of recourse enables the discriminating mind to exist alongside the devotion laden heart. However, certain requirements of historical legitimacy must be met before the seeker can relax into his/her practice with relative confidence. Most importantly the guru must have confirmation for his claim of mastership by outside sources. If this requirement is bypassed then the neophyte runs the risk of having only his teacher be able to validate his realizations. Such single

source legitimacy, as Wilber terms it, is open to a series of problems, not the least of which is excessive narcissism on behalf of the guru, who becomes by virtue of his self-appointment the final and only authority for spiritual matters. Verification, therefore, is not only helpful in determining the master's real status, but is necessary in moving religious endeavors out of isolation, where excess and ethical transgressions are more likely to occur. As John Welwood argues:

"Many of the world's great religious traditions have lines of spiritual transmission, i.e., a person's realization is tested by his teachers before he is allowed to represent himself as a master. This is especially true in all the (major) lineages of Buddhism as well as in other Asian traditions. The process of testing and transmission serves as a kind of "quality control" to insure that a given teacher does not distort the teachings for his own personal gain."

Yet, in the midst of this convoluted myth making, how is the unsuspecting seeker to know? Therefore, it is of particular importance that the historical antecedents of any guru/group be thoroughly investigated. Though the search may not be easy, it is a must if there is to be any intellectual integrity on the part of the disciple.

6. Are The Central Teachings Of The Guru/Movement Trans- Rational Or Pre-Rational?

"The aim and object of all religions and of all ancient seers has been to take the soul, by one means or another, back to its source. Perfect is he who, by practice and meditation, lifts his soul to its real abode, freeing it from all bonds, both internal and external, gross, subtle, causal, and thus detaches his mind from the world and its phenomena. The perfect sadhus, real gyanis, true lovers or devotees of the Lord, are those only who reach the last stage. They who only talk of the Perfect Ones, or read their teachings to others without reaching the stage or practicing towards that end are only intellectuals and theorists."
--Shiv Dayal Singh, Sar Bachan Prose--

Contrary to what most secular humanists believe, like Paul Kurtz and Issac Asimov, true religion is a transrational endeavor to achieve higher states of consciousness beyond the verbal mind. Genuine mystics are not concerned with pre-rational forms of behavior, such as mythic logic, group-think, dogma, obedience without insight, and so forth. These types of thinking work against rather than promote spiritual enlightenment. An authentic tradition centers its teachings on direct, personal contact with the Supreme Reality by engaging in day to day meditation, prayer, or zazen.

Nothing can substitute for the disciple's own effort and inward progress not vicarious atonement, not the burning of karmas by the guru, not God's grace, though all of these elements have their part. Individual action, though understood in relationship with the Lord's mercy and grace, is stressed above all else by genuine gurus/movements. No true mystic will ever ask a student to believe in him/her blindly or follow the teachings uncritically. Comments Tulsi Sahib, a renowned saint in the Sant Mat tradition who lived in the 19th century:

"When with my own eyes do I behold, then shall I accept what the Sat-Guru saith"
Adds Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, "Until with my own eyes do I see, the word of the Guru satisfieth me not...".
And finally writes Shiv Dayal Singh, "Know thou thyself by thyself; believe not at all what others say".

What are trans-rational practices? Disciplines which concentrate on higher, not lower, states of consciousness and which enable the student to master the lower tendencies of the mind. Hence, trans-rational engagements do not squelch critical thinking but actually help the reasoning process by allowing it to see more fully the vast potential of human life. As Wilber so clearly indicated, there is a fundamental difference between a sangat of meditating Zen monks and a clan of deluded Jim Jones devotees. The former is trans-rational because the monks take their intelligence with them into satori; whereas the latter is pre-rational because Jonestown members foresook their individuality for regressive magical-mythic belonging.

7. What Are The Day To Day Results Of Your Interaction With The Guru/Path?

Devotee: "How can one know whether a particular individual is competent to be a Guru?"
Ramana Maharshi: "By the peace of mind found in his presence and by the sense of

respect you feel for him."

Questioner: "How can I make out whom to follow and whom to mistrust?"

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj: "Mistrust all until you are convinced. The true guru will never humiliate you nor will he estrange you from yourself. He will constantly bring you back to the fact of your inherent perfection and encourage you to seek within. He knows you need nothing, not even him, and is never tired of reminding you..."

If the guru/movement is authentic they will help you to better understand yourself, your family, your relationships, and God. Such understanding, however, does not necessarily mean that your worldly life will improve accordingly. For instance, following a spiritual path does not insure one against losing money, facing natural catastrophies, and struggling with domestic problems; it only helps one in coping better with all the various aspects of human existence.

Obviously, the results of your interaction with the guru/path should be apparent to your close associates: more openness, kindness, compassion, selflessness, honesty, and loving devotion. If these qualities are not exhibited it can be due to two reasons: you are not practicing consistently what the guru/path advocates; or, you are following teachings which place more stress on selfish, prerational, and anti-social behavior. Interestingly, it is easier to determine a fraudulent message than it is to own up to your immaturity and lack of discipline.

The effect of the guru on your personal life should be clearly evident, especially if you feel that your teacher is God-realized. Thus, there is as much responsibility on the shoulders of a disciple as there is on a guru. Both must be willing to surrender to a reality higher than themselves; the devotee to his master's instructions; the master to the living presence of God, to whom he has liberated his being.

How To Score Your Answers On The Spiritual Crucible

If after taking the "spiritual crucible" you find out that your guru charges money for membership, lives an unethical lifestyle, self-proclaims his mastership, encourages proselytizing, alleges to be God-incarnated, emphasizes pre-rational practices, and demands total obedience, it can be assumed that you're on the wrong path and that your guru is a charlatan.

On the other hand, if your guru/path scores positively in all areas (such an accomplishment, by the way, is rare), then you are very fortunate to have been led to a beneficial and legitimate spiritual movement. The responsibility now shifts to your shoulders, as it is up to you to take advantage of the situation. Enlightenment is a two way process, the outcome of two interacting forces: God's grace and the disciple's effort.

Most of the results, however, will be a combination of positive and negative scores, with some guru/paths meeting the criterions in three or four sections but missing the marks in other parts. In this case, it is essential that the seeker fully weigh the pros and cons to his guru's mission. If one decides to stay in the movement, then it is necessary to discard those elements of the teachings which do not coincide with his/her best interests. However, if one leaves the group, it does not mean that everything has to be forgotten. Rather, those features which are beneficial and helpful should be taken along as guidelines for the journey.

Ultimately, following a spiritual master or path requires a tremendous amount of maturity, self-control, and discrimination. To achieve God-Realization is not an overnight affair, or the outcome of feeble effort, it is the culmination of consistent day to day application of transcendent mystical teachings. In the end, the greatest obstacle of all is not the guru or the movement, it is the disciple.

Postscript

There is a fundamental problem with this essay which I suspect most readers will clearly see. It assumes that I have some idea of what enlightenment or ultimate truth is. Clearly I don't know. But what I do know is that most traditions which speak of truth or enlightenment set up criteria by which to adjudicate the relative claims of would-be masters. And when these traditions are taken as a whole we get some idea of what some of the major problems are that religious humans are trying to overcome. In a nutshell, such templates of moral living may not have a clue on what truth is, but they do suggest what it is not or, at the very least, what we find non-desirable in spiritual gurus. In this way, the preceding essay helps awaken naive seekers to the pitfalls that await them. This is not to suggest, however, that my template of good paths and good gurus is the only one possible or necessarily one which is correct; it is, rather, a

goad, a prompt for one to inspect his or her religious delvings. It is as a prompt, I would suggest, that the essay is useful; outside of that, I should warn the reader that even though I may be a seasoned veteran of guru wars I really am quite unsure what lies beyond (or, for that matter, before) existence. In this regard, I find myself swimming in a sea of ignorance; thankfully, it appears that I have trillions of companions.

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Paul is kneeling on the left, looking down.
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*Paulji with Anya and Frederick
Foos, New York, May 1971.*

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